BLUE BOOK

DECEMBER

Price 25 Cents

The Good Stranger
by JACK LEONARD

Small Hero
by ACHMED ABDULLAH

The Devil's Commando
by WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN

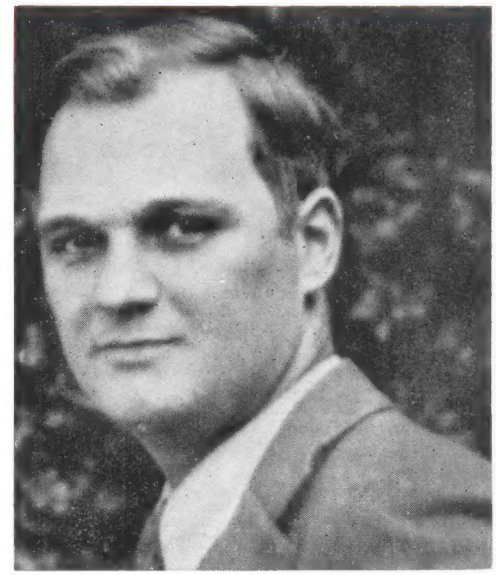
Special Service
by PHIL MAGEE

Punch for Your Pennies
by DANIEL WINTERS

And Many Others

Who's Who *in this* Issue

Jack Leonard



JACK LEONARD was born in Sandwich, Massachusetts, in 1903, and grew up on Cape Cod, in Arizona and North Carolina. He was graduated from Harvard in 1925 and soon thereafter went to work for the New York *Times*. Afterward he went into free-lance writing and first wrote four books of popular technology.

Extensive travel in Latin America led to two important developments: he married a Peruvian girl, and started writing fiction with Latin American backgrounds. Because some of this fiction came close to the facts of the situation under the régime of the Dictator Gomez, and because, as he said, "I would like to visit the country again and return undamaged," he used the pen name of "Gregorio Somers" for stories of that type until after the death of Gomez. Since that time he has continued fiction writing under his own name, and has achieved a distinct success. His serial "The Valley Stronghold" ran in BLUE BOOK in 1937. A really worthy and memorable piece "The Good Stranger" begins on page two of this issue.

Amos J. Peaslee

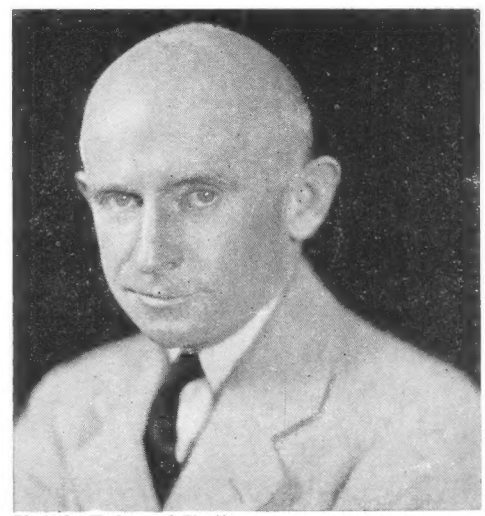


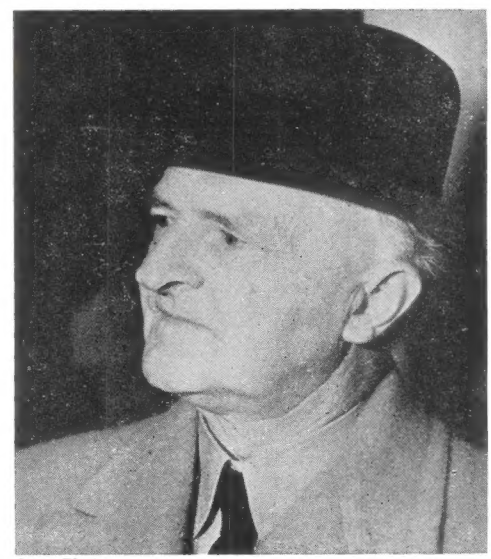
Photo by Underwood-Stratton

AMOS PEASLEE served as a Major in the Army in the first World War and as a Commander in the Navy in the recent one. But his heart is in the law and now more particularly in practical international politics and government.

Hard-headed, but warm-hearted, he was early recognized as one of the ablest and most promising of the younger members of the New York Bar. He not only led the successful legal battle in the American sabotage claims against Germany, but appeared in scores of others of the tangled cases which arose from the last war.

As a young major in the American Army attached to General Pershing's headquarters in France, Peaslee organized and commanded the "Silver Greyhounds." They were a trusted band of officers who carried all of the dispatches between Europe and America throughout the first war. After the Armistice they were attached to the Peace Conference in Paris and reëstablished communications with our Embassies and Legations and Field Commissions abroad. They were the American counterpart of the British "King's Messengers."

Admiral Sir Reginald Hall



Acme Photo

CAPTAIN REGINALD HALL of the Battleship *Queen Mary* was already a dramatic figure in August 1914. His father before him had been the first Director of the British Naval Intelligence when it was established in 1887. The younger Hall went to sea at the age of ten on his father's ship, the *Flamingo*. He entered the Britannia as a cadet, was commissioned in the Navy, and rapidly rose to become one of its best known figures. He improved living conditions and established reforms on his own ship which spread throughout the Navy and are benefiting British sailors of the fleet to this day.

The job which Hall did from 1914 to 1919 is unparalleled in history. For it he was knighted, and until his death on October 22, 1943, he was Admiral Sir W. Reginald Hall, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.C.L., LL.D.

Admiral Hall intercepted and decoded every cable and radiogram sent or received by Germany from the time he reported for duty until the end of the first war. He played a dramatic part in the capture of many famous spies, including Mata Hari and Franz von Rintelen.

Perhaps Hall's finest achievement among the many coups which he engineered was his mythical electrical Dover submarine barrage. In the early months of the war the German U-boats were threatening the vital British cross-channel communications. In the London *Daily Telegraph* of October

23, 1943, we are given the following account of what happened:

"It was essential that something be done at once, but it was impossible to construct an effective barrage for some weeks.

"Sir Reginald evolved 'plans' of a remarkable electrically controlled device which would destroy any submarine in its orbit.

"The 'plans' were purchased at a high price by one of the most trusted German spies and safely sent to Germany with the active assistance of the British authorities.

"For a long time the U-boats shunned the 'barrage' and before they had recovered their nerve a real barrage had been created."

And the London *Daily Express* of the same date tells this delightful story: "Sir Reginald disclosed after the surrender of the German Fleet in 1918 that the rendezvous suggested by the Germans for meeting the British Fleet [to complete the formalities of surrender after the Armistice] was in the middle of a German minefield.

"Hall was asked if our vessels went to the spot. He replied, 'Certainly, the British Fleet always keeps an appointment.'

"The minefield had been swept the day before."

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, Etc., required by the Acts of Congress of August 24, 1912, and March 3, 1933,

of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE published monthly at Dayton, Ohio, for October 1, 1944.

State of New York, County of New York, ss.

Before me, a Notary in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared Louis F. Boller, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Assistant Treasurer of McCall Corporation, Publisher of The Blue Book Magazine and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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Louis F. Boller, Assistant Treasurer

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 11th day of September, 1944. Victor J. Lore, Notary Public, Kings County, Kings Co. Clks. No. 16, Reg. No. 25L-6. Certificates Filed in N. Y. Co. Clk's. No. 18, Reg. No. 19L6. Commission expires March 30, 1946.

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The Good Stranger

HOW very quickly disaster can strike! Damoola sat in her manless grass hut, and wept. The village had been so happy before—a man for each household and several attractive bachelors; but now all the men had been taken off by Devils, and the King was dead.

From other huts in the village came frightened sobbing.

"Our men are gone," wailed an old lady's voice. "If the Ancient Enemies come—"

"They will carry us off," said a beautiful girl.

The old voice screamed: "When you're young, it is fun to be captured. But I am old. They will eat me."

Damoola frowned toward the voices. She was moderately young herself, but she didn't want to be captured. She loved her man. She loved her house. She loved her eight children (counting the four who had died and were therefore not always visible). She loved the village—her nation. It had gardens and pigs, and fish in the river. The forest was full of animals good to eat, and the nearest unfriendly Devils lived miles away. No other place in the world was so favored by nature, so well protected from enemies. If only the men were back!

She went to the door and looked out. The sun was still high overhead —disaster had happened so quickly—and the narrow valley was buzzing with heat. The mountains stood steep and green around it. The river ran foaming past. Up the river lived men with tails—or so it was said. Down the river lived the Ancient Enemies. But what lived farther away? Beyond? Below?

Damoola did not know. She had never worried about it. Nobody had. Except for the Ancient Enemies, who required watching, the outside world mattered not at all. It was full of Devils and wicked people, but they all seemed absorbed in their own affairs. They had never pushed up past the Ancient Enemies into the mountain-walled valley.

A drama of the Pacific from the viewpoint of the more-or-less innocent bystander.

by Jack Leonard

Who wrote "The Valley Stronghold."

Now it was different. The outside Devils were stirring and roaming. They flew through the air. They crept through the forest. A mysterious stranger lived in the valley itself. He was a Good One, perhaps not a Devil at all. But Bad Ones that morning surrounded the village. They killed the King by magic, and took all the men away. What a world to live in! What terrible times!

IT began with the roaring bird. A man of substance had killed a pig to celebrate his daughter's adolescence, and all the people sat feasting and happy in the cool of the late afternoon. Then down from the highest mountain swooped an enormous bird. It roared like a waterfall. The people ran and hid, but the bird didn't try to catch them. It flew away at impossible speed, leaving echoes behind. The little forest Devils whispered from tree to tree. They were frightened too, and the people were frightened so badly that they didn't finish the pig.

That night the Chief Magician held a Service in the Men's Club. He opened the Holy Hole. He took out the Holy Bag. He appealed to all the Devils he knew. He danced and screamed, beat drums, drank poison and shouted. At the end he expressed entire confidence.

"If the roaring bird comes back," he said, "it will fall to earth, and we shall eat it."

"How do you know?" asked the King with some hostility. He had quarreled with him about a beautiful girl, for the Chief Magician—though old—was deeply polygamous.

"Powerful Devils have promised. Look!" The Chief Magician opened the Holy Bag and took out a model bird of straw. It had short, straight wings and a tail of bush-turkey feathers. "When I hit this bird with my club," he said, "the great bird above will die."

A FEW days later the roaring bird came back, and two other roaring birds dived at it out of a cloud. They circled about one another, screaming. They snapped their beaks and clattered their claws. Then two of them plunged to earth beyond the mountains, leaving pillars of smoke in the sky. The third remained.

It happened so quickly that the Chief Magician hardly had time to go in the Holy Hole and get the model bird. He laid it on the ground.

"Now watch," he cried, and raised his club.

"I'm watching," said the King.

The Chief Magician smashed the model. Then he looked up in the sky. The roaring bird was silent now. It circled on silent wings. It wobbled a little and settled down. Then it plunged out of sight beyond the mountains, and a great white flower bloomed in the air behind it.

"I told you so," crowed the Chief Magician. "My Devils never fail me."

"What's that flower?" asked the King.

"That's the soul of the bird."

The great white flower floated down and lit on the mountainside near the village. The King was the first to get there, followed closely by the Chief Magician and all the rest of the people. They found the flower among the rocks. It was made of miraculous cloth as fine as a butterfly's wing; and attached to the petals by numerous cords was a tall, unconscious man. He was covered with cloth or leather from head to foot, so that only his face could be seen.

"They are fighting," she said. "The Bad Ones, the Good Ones, and all kinds of Devils too."

"It's not a ghost," said the King. "It's a man."

"I knew it all the time," said the Chief Magician. "He was riding on the bird, as Devils ride on cassowaries. We shall eat him at once."

The Chief Magician was old but very carnivorous.

"No, we won't," said the King. "Not yet. We shall nurse him back to health, and ask him about these portents. A King must keep informed."

The Chief Magician had to yield, for the temporal power was paramount, but he wouldn't let the stranger live in the village itself. You never can tell. He looked like a man, but he might be an evil Devil. He might make a lot of trouble.

So they carried him to the health resort—a hut beneath a medicinal tree where a curative Devil lived. They took off his clothes. He was made like a regular man, but his skin was a pinkish color like the under side of a pig. They looked for wounds, but he had not many—only a cut in his head, a gash in his thigh and a twisted ankle. He ought to live.

THE women took turns taking care of him. He woke up after a while. He smiled, but he couldn't talk. He made a lot of noises, but they didn't mean a thing.

"Let's eat him right now," said the Chief Magician carnivorously. "He can't tell us anything. He doesn't know how to talk."

"We'll teach him," said the King. "We'll eat him after he tells us about the portents."

The women sprinkled the stranger's wounds with healing, bright-red wood-dust. They covered his swollen ankle with mashed bananas, medicated. They massaged it tenderly. He slowly grew stronger. At last he was well again, though he limped a little.

By this time he knew a few words of human speech. He could say the simplest things, such as *"Food"* and *"Water"* and *"Beautiful Girl,"* but when the King asked him to explain the roaring birds,—what they ate, how they built their nests, what their eggs looked like,—he merely scratched his head and made a lot of noises which were not informative.

"He'll never learn," said the Chief Magician. "Let's eat him now."

"Not yet," said the King. "We'll give him until the moon is full. We'll eat him then if he can't tell us all those things."

Illustrated by John Fulton

The women wept when they heard the King's decision. They were fond of the man they had nursed back to health, in spite of the fact that he hadn't much hair and his skin was a funny color.

"I won't eat a bit of him," said Damoola, who had done the most skillful nursing.

"None of us will," said the others.

The moon grew larger and larger, and still the stranger could not tell about the roaring birds. The Chief Magician grinned with carnivorous expectation, but the rest of the people looked sadder and sadder. The stranger had grown very popular with them. He made little toys for the children. He sang gay songs for the beautiful girls. He gave the men wonderful fishhooks. He gave the King a box of little sticks. You scratched one stick against the box, and there—right off!—you had a fire.

Nobody wanted to eat him, but the Chief Magician insisted.

"You promised," he told the King, "and you know what the Devils do to kings who break their promises."

The King knew only too well. It's a terrible strain to be a king.

"All right," he agreed reluctantly. "The moon is full tomorrow. But I don't like to do it at all. I'd rather make him a citizen."

The Chief Magician was delighted, but all the others who heard wept.

BUT tomorrow never came, in a manner of speaking. Just before dawn, up the valley stole a file of yellow men. They carried short spears with glittering points. Their bodies were covered with dull green cloth. They wore pots on their heads. Their faces were flat, and their eyes were in folds of skin. They walked like cats in the forest at night, without rustle or whisper.

They surrounded the village and waited. When the sun lit up the sky, they gave a shout. The King was the first to awake. He snatched up his war-spear and challenged them man to man, as Kings are expected to do. The yellow men raised their spears. There came a flash of lightning, a roar of thunder, and the King fell over dead.

This proved beyond doubt that they were Devils, so the men of the village did not try to fight or run away. There's no use resisting Devils. The women hid in the forest (no Devil can stop a woman from hiding), and when they came back, all the men had been taken away. So had the pigs and most of the food in the village.

Damoola surveyed this sorrowful scene. It was noontime now, but the King still lay on the ground where he had fallen—which presented a problem of decorum: A king may touch a woman, and frequently does, but a woman may not touch a king unless he has first touched her.

Damoola felt that something ought to be done, conventions or no conventions.

"He's my uncle," she said in a loud tone of voice. "We can't leave him there forever."

She was near the lid of the Holy Hole, a slanting trapdoor covered deep with vines. With the greatest caution it opened, and the Chief Magician looked out.

"So they didn't get you," said Damoola. "The only one!"

"Of course not," said the Chief Magician. "I stayed in the Holy Hole, protected by Devils."

"Why didn't your Devils protect the rest of the men?"

"They had another engagement."

Damoola spat in disgust, "What we need around here is new Devils. And what shall we do with the King?"

"Eat him," said the Chief Magician promptly. "His soul will enjoy being eaten."

"Not by you. He didn't like you."

The Chief Magician strutted before the women. "I'm the only man left. I'm the King."

"You are not!" cried Damoola. She gave him a push in the chest so that he staggered backward. "You are

"So they didn't get you," said Damoola.

"When I hit this bird with my club, the great bird above will die."

much too old to rule women. I am the boss of the village until the men come back. The King was my uncle. We'll give him a proper funeral."

So they put the King in a basket, the women taking care not to touch his body directly. They carried him into the forest and hoisted him high in a pink-flowered tree. In its top lived a young, attractive, immortal and female Devil. And that is the best which his sorrowing subjects can do for any King.

The women had hardly returned from this solemn duty when into the village walked the tall pink stranger. He was strong and healthy now, and he didn't limp any more.

"Gone?" he asked anxiously. "The Bad Ones?"

"Yes, gone," said the women, weeping. "They took all our men away."

"I hid," said the stranger. "My enemies too."

The women brightened a little. Here was a man, a young and vigorous man in spite of his unpleasant color. They crowded close around him—the little children, the beautiful girls, the portly matrons, the withered old ladies. He towered above them, embarrassed. His favorite baby held tight to his thumb, and the oldest inhabitant gave him her treasure—the genuine tooth of a Devil.

The Chief Magician sulked on the outskirts of the crowd. Then he glanced down the valley, gave a scream of terror, popped into the Holy Hole and slammed the lid. The others looked down the valley too. Around the bend in the trail came a long procession of people.

"Run! Hide!" cried some. "It's the Ancient Enemies!"

"Wait," Damoola advised calmly. "They're only women and children. I think the Bad Ones have taken their menfolk too."

THAT was just what had happened. The Ancient Enemy women were weeping and sad, but they had one bit of good news: The men had not been eaten yet. The Bad Ones had taken them down the valley and were making them carry burdens and dig in the ground. They guarded them all the time with their thunder-spears so they couldn't run away.

"Perhaps we can get them back," said Damoola hopefully.

The Ancient Enemy women were not very optimistic. The Bad Ones were certainly Devils, they said, or closely allied with Devils. They slept in houses of cloth. They rode on the backs of roaring beasts as big as fifty men.

But Damoola had an idea. She went to the tall pink stranger and took both his hands in hers.

"You must help us," she pleaded. "We did not eat you. You must help us now."

The stranger looked perplexed. "What can I do?" he asked.

"You are a friend of Devils. Ask them to come and help us. We want our men home again."

The stranger scratched his head and considered the problem. "Where does the river go to?" he asked.

Damoola went to the Holy Hole and called for the Chief Magician. After a while he came out.

"Of course I know where the river goes to," he said with dignity. "But it is Holy Knowledge. I can't tell women."

"You'd better," said Damoola. She spread her fingers like claws.

"All right, all right." The Chief Magician retreated a little. "The river flows on and on for months through the lands of wicked people. It gets very wide and slow. At last it gets so wide that you can't see the other bank. That is the end of the world."

"No good," said the stranger. He shook his head. "What is there up the river?"

"There are men with tails," said the Chief Magician. "It gets very cold. The forest stops. Then a little river begins. It runs very fast, all waterfalls. At last it reaches a lake of salty water. There are Devils riding across it on moving islands."

"Moving islands?" The stranger looked interested.

"Yes," said the Chief Magician grumpily. "Some have tall white trees growing on them. Others have fires with smoke. This is Holy Knowledge. It was told to my father by Devils. No one has ever been up the river, and no one has ever come down."

"I shall go up the river," the stranger said. "I shall find the Devils who live on moving islands. They are very good friends of mine."

Damoola got him his clothes, and she made the Chief Magician get him his shoes from the Men's Club, where they'd been on exhibition with the national skull collection. She packed some food in a basket, and she gave him the King's own spear—the best in town.

"You will need it," she told him, "if you meet the men with tails."

At last he was ready to go, and all the women were weeping—even the Ancient Enemy women who hadn't known him long. He smiled at the beautiful girls. He tickled his favorite baby. Then he shook Damoola by the hand and started up the river. They watched him until he was out of sight. He turned around twice to wave.

The Chief Magician didn't say goodby. He sat with a sour expression close to the Holy Hole. As soon as the stranger was gone, he spat disgustedly.

"The men with tails will eat him," he said. "If they don't, he will die of cold in the mountains. If he doesn't die of cold, the mountain Devils will push him over a cliff."

DAMOOLA walked over and stood before him, frowning. She rather enjoyed being boss of the village, and she felt much stronger than women generally feel.

"Hurry up," she commanded. "Hold a Service to keep him safe."

"I won't," said the Chief Magician.

"You'd better," warned Damoola. "Or we shall eat you."

The other women gathered behind her. Some had sticks and some had rocks. A beautiful girl got a spear from her father's house. The favorite baby ran up with a thorny palm leaf.

"All right, all right," said the Chief Magician. He drew some lines in the dust and muttered a few magic words. Damoola watched him critically.

"You'd better use your strongest charms," she said, "and call on your biggest Devils. If you don't bring him back, we shall eat you."

The women moved one step forward, lifting their sticks and rocks. The Chief Magician sprang to his feet. He went in the Holy Hole and brought out the Holy Bag. He lit a fire and fed it with magic things. He danced and screamed. He beat his drums. He frothed at the mouth and talked in unknown languages.

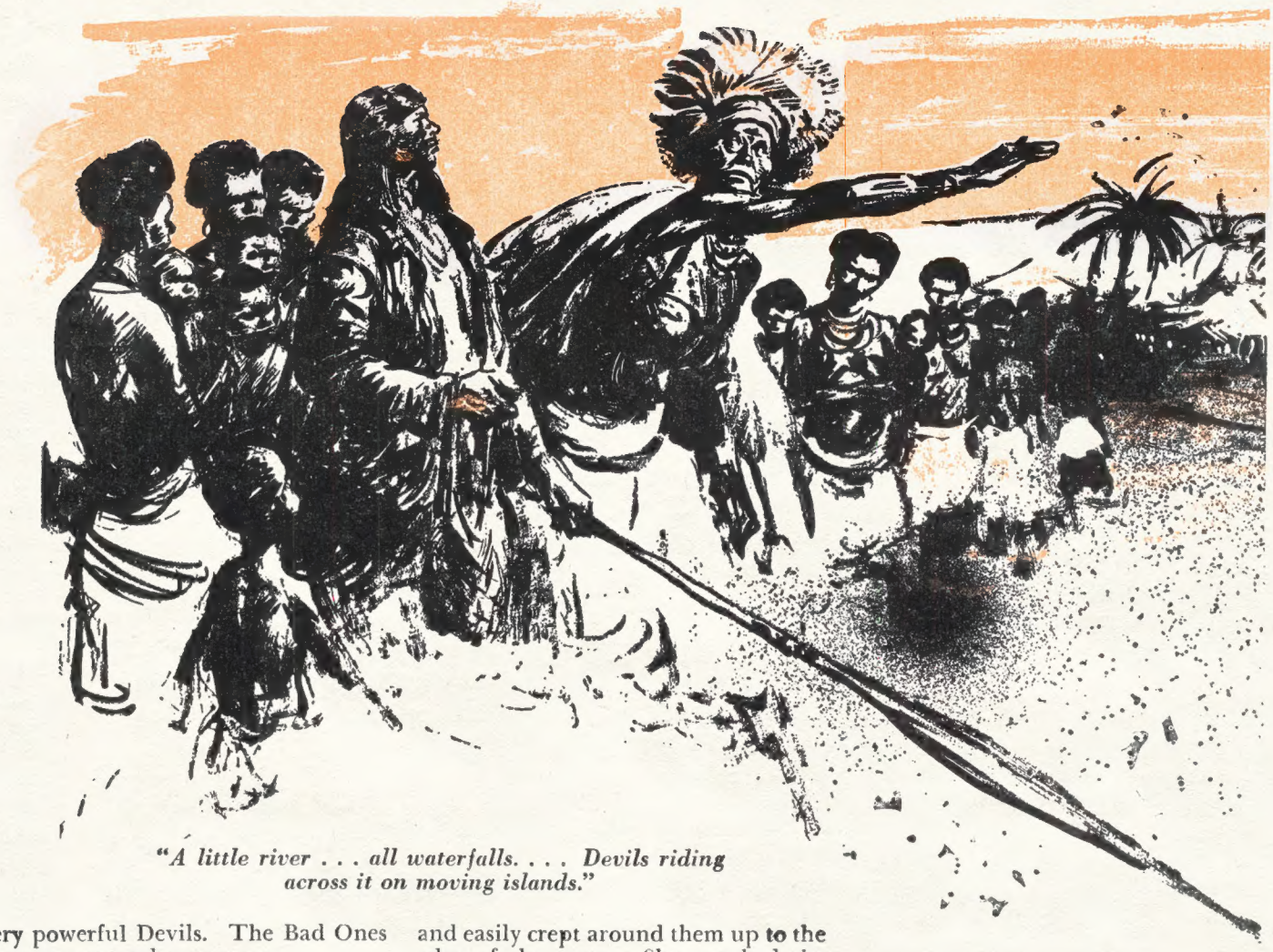
"That was better," said Damoola. "Repeat it every day until he comes."

That night the women were very frightened. They didn't dare stay in the village for fear of the yellow Bad Ones, and so Damoola led them into the forest, where they huddled cold and wet until the dawn. Next morning she posted sentries—old ladies who didn't sleep well and who screamed like cockatoos. Then she went down the valley and crept near the camp of the Bad Ones.

It was true, and worse. That camp was alive with Devils. There were roaring beasts which breathed out smoke behind. There were knives which cut up forest trees as if they were nothing at all. She saw the men of the village digging holes in the earth, carrying pieces of trees and helping the Bad Ones build a house by the river.

She came back rather discouraged. The tall pink stranger would need

The women took turns taking care of him. He slowly grew stronger.



"A little river . . . all waterfalls. . . . Devils riding across it on moving islands."

very powerful Devils. The Bad Ones were strong and numerous.

It is a terrible thing for women to be alone. Each day they grew more frightened. Every sound at night was the stealthy step of a Bad One. The river boomed with a threatening sound. The friendly forest Devils left the valley, and their places were taken by horrible specters with luminous teeth and eyes. The babies cried all the time, for they could see the invisible. The old ladies woke up and screamed at night. They heard the bones of their ancestors rattling in the treetops.

Only Damoola was unafraid.

"He'll come back," she said with confidence. "He'll go to the place where his Devils live, and he'll bring them back to help us. We treated him well. We cured his wounds, and we did not eat him."

But nevertheless she took the normal precautions. Every day she made the Chief Magician hold a Service, calling for help from his Devils. And often she went down the valley to watch what the Bad Ones were doing. There were more of them now. The house by the river was turning into a bridge, growing out from both banks. It had almost met in the middle.

Damoola went very close. She learned where the sentries were posted and easily crept around them up to the edge of the camp. She watched the Bad Ones eating their meals, washing their clothes. She watched the prisoners working. Once she saw her own dear man. He was lifting big sticks of wood, and looked very sad and lonely. She saw other men from the village. At night the Bad Ones shut them all up in a cage with a fence around it.

One day when Damoola was halfway down to the Bad Ones' camp, she heard a frightful noise in the air overhead. She hid in a bush as a roaring bird screamed down from out of the sky. Then came an enormous blast and the earth trembled like jelly. Damoola was terrified, but she went home rather encouraged. It proved that not all the Devils were fighting on the Bad Ones' side.

DAYS passed; the tall pink stranger didn't return. The moon grew small and began to grow big again, but still the women didn't abandon hope. They talked about him all the time. They pictured him crossing the land of the men with tails, climbing the cold bleak mountains and clambering down their precipitous sides to the land where his Devils lived. The children played with the toys he had made. The beautiful girls sang the songs he had taught them. The favorite baby tickled himself and laughed in retrospect.

One evening, just after sunset, Damoola set out for the camp of the Bad Ones. She had never been out at night alone. The darkness around her was teeming with ghosts and Devils. They whispered and fluttered. They pointed at her. She trembled in every limb, but still she pressed on. She wanted to see her man, to hear his voice again.

It was easy to pass the sentries. When Damoola got to the camp itself, she crept on the ground like a snake. Slowly by inches she worked her way up to the prisoners' cage, where she hid in a clump of weeds. She could see the men inside, huddled together with hardly room to lie down.

She whispered the name of her man. No one answered. Then she threw a pebble. A prisoner lifted his head.

"Quiet," she whispered. "I am Damoola. I want to talk to my man."

The prisoners stirred. At last her man crept near the fence. He thrust out a hand, and she touched it.

"Soon you'll be home again," she said encouragingly. "Remember the

tall pink stranger who fell from the sky? He is grateful to us because we didn't eat him. He has gone to get Devils to help you."

Her man shook his head. "They will come too late. Soon the bridge and the road will be finished. Then the Bad Ones will take us far away. We will never get home again."

Damoola started to cry, though silently. She touched her man's hand again and crept away from the camp. When she got back home, she woke up the Chief Magician and made him hold a special midnight Service.

"I don't think much of your Devils," she told him, "but perhaps they can help a little."

The Chief Magician lit a Holy Fire. He was still hard at work—beating his drums, dancing and frothing—when the old lady sentry on the upriver side of the village began to scream like a cockatoo.

"Devils!" she screamed. "Big ones!"

She suddenly stopped. Then her voice broke out in a cry of joy.

"He has come! The stranger! And many more!"

All the women came out of the houses. They gathered by the fire, wreathed in smiles, while into the village marched a column of men. They were tall and pink like the stranger, who marched at their head. They carried packs on their backs and all sorts of curious weapons.

Damoola ran forward and clung to the stranger's hands.

"The Bad Ones have finished their bridge," she cried. "Soon they will take our men away."

"You must tell me all about them," said the stranger. "I will tell my friends. We have powerful Devils to help us."

Damoola sat down by the fire and told all she knew about the camp of the Bad Ones. The stranger listened carefully and asked a great many questions. The favorite baby sat on his knee, and the beautiful girls crowded close around him. When Damoola finished, the stranger talked with his friends. They seemed very pleased with her information, for they gave her a wonderful knife which glittered like sunlight on water.

"YOU have helped us a lot," the stranger said. "The Bad Ones are our enemies. We want very much to destroy their bridge. Now show us the way to their camp. We will rescue your men at dawn."

Damoola set off down the valley at the head of the column of strangers. She wasn't afraid this time. The ghosts of the night were silent, for powerful Devils were with her. It was almost dawn when they reached the camp. Damoola showed where the sentries were.

"Now you'd better go home," said the stranger. "This is no place for a woman. Soon we shall loose our Devils. The earth will shake. The sky will be full of thunder, and death will fly through the air."

Damoola started back. She was hardly out of sight when the thunder crashed behind her. Small Devils hissed through the air. She ran like mad. The earth shook under her feet, and mighty clouds of smoke billowed up on the calm of the morning.

When she got to the village, the women were terrified. They pressed around her and clung anxiously to her hands.

"They are fighting," she said. "The Bad Ones, the Good Ones, and all kinds of Devils too."

After a while the thundering stopped, and the Chief Magician came out of the Holy Hole.

"Are the Bad Ones dead?" he asked with carnivorousness.

"Some," said Damoola, "and probably many."

"Let's eat them."

Damoola considered the matter. The Bad Ones were certainly enemies, and the Chief Magician was all worn out. He had worked very hard for a month to help the victory.

"All right," she said. "Perhaps the men will bring us a few."

They all stared down the valley—the women, the children, the beautiful girls—watching the bend in the trail. At last they screamed with joy, for they saw the men come running. They carried all sorts of valuable things—knives and kettles and pieces of cloth. Damoola's man was in the lead.

"The Bad Ones are dead," he cried. "The Good Ones brought powerful Devils which thundered and flashed and screamed through the air."

The Chief Magician ran forward, his hands a-tremble with eagerness.

"Where are they?" he cried. "The Bad Ones for us to eat?"

Damoola's man looked apologetic. "We can't eat the Bad Ones," he said. "I asked the King of the Good Ones. He said they tasted terrible."

Our Soldiers Three undertake to escort a visiting contralto but find their rivals of the Tank Command on the job ahead of them. Fighting men, moreover, do not underestimate each other.

by PHIL MAGEE

HALTING before the Colonel's desk, the little man stepped smartly to the left, Tony Milano and Big John Ross moving up beside him. "Sir," the little man announced, "Sergeants Sullivan, Ross and Milano report to the battalion commander."

Glancing from Tony's two-hundred-and-thirty-pound bulk to Big John's six-foot-four-inch figure, the Colonel turned to Sergeant Sullivan. "You may stand at ease," he said.

Puzzled, the little man gazed attentively at his battalion commander. The outfit had arrived at this rest camp less than four hours ago, and even Big John hadn't had time to stir up any trouble.

The Colonel smiled benignly. "We have ten days before we go up again," he said. "They'll be days to remember. I have made arrangements with Special Service in Naples. We will have entertainment nightly."

Big John grinned, and a slow smile creased Tony's face.

Though opposed to hypocrisy, the little man accepted their pleasure for what it was: complete faith in his ability to devise escape from any regimented entertainment. "That's splendid, sir," he said, managing the expected degree of enthusiasm. "Is there anything we can do?"

"I am coming to that," the Colonel purred. "The arrangements I spoke of were not made without some difficulty. You are perhaps aware that the camp below us is occupied by the tank outfit that was with us at Terracina?"

The smile left Tony's face; Big John scowled; and the little man frowned thoughtfully.

"Nobody'd ask for a better outfit—at Terracina," Tony admitted. "But I remember when we were garrisoned with 'em, back in the States."

"Yah," Big John cut in bitterly. "I sit up all night fixing a deck of cards for pay-day. And what happens? Them monkeys rub my stuff off the cards before the deal gets halfway round the table."

"I know," the Colonel said. "It's hard for an organization of our high standards to compete with such an outfit. But as infantrymen, we must do our best."

His noncommissioned officers nodded their agreement.

"Aware of the type of competition we might expect, I hurried to Naples," the Colonel said. "Passing the camp of our neighbors, I saw their C.O.'s car parked by the roadside. I—er—took certain precautionary measures."

The Colonel coughed, decorously. "Special Service was a bit short of immediately available talent," he continued, "but they have a contralto due in at 1800. I had hardly completed arrangements for the rest of our stay, when the tank commander arrived. And frankly, Sullivan, one expects more dignity from an officer of the field grade. Why, the fellow had the temerity to accuse me of letting the air out of both his rear tires. Actually I had time for only one."

Special Service

Only one truly desperate could hope to go anywhere, while the seat of his pants was held in Tony's grasp.

In silent respect, Sergeants Sullivan, Ross and Milano regarded their battalion commander.

The Colonel bowed. "Using the 'Reunion in Naples' routine, the tank commander claimed priority on this singer's services, advancing some obviously fabricated tale about a member of his outfit who had once been her accompanist. Failing in this, he resorted to threat, and a not too subtle insinuation that my arrangements included no guarantee of appearance."

"That sounds like 'em, sir," Tony agreed.

"Our show will be at 2030," the Colonel said. "We won't be prepared to receive anyone before then. So you will meet her at 1800, show her around town for an hour or so, and arrive here promptly at 2030. Do you need any money?"

"No sir," the little man said hurriedly. "But won't Special Service expect —er—that is, wouldn't a junior officer be more appropriate?"

The Colonel shook his head. "Junior officers can hardly be expected to match your highly developed sensitivity to sharp practice, Sullivan. Nor are they so well equipped to circumvent the unexpected."

He looked at John. "No junior officer of my command has ever held a night-club bouncer in each hand, and cracked their skulls together," he sighed. He smiled at Tony. "No member of our commissioned personnel has ever thrown a policeman through a two-inch door," he said. "Should this singer fail to appear, you can imagine my feelings, Sullivan."

This the little man could well imagine.

"But I am not known as 'Kindly Kenneth Hendricks' for nothing," the Colonel said. "I couldn't send a junior officer. Just think of it, Sullivan. If *he* came back without her, I could only break his back."

Sadly the little man looked at Kindly Kenneth Hendricks.

The Colonel held out an envelope. "Your introduction to the Special Service Officer," he said. "You may take the weapons-carrier. Dismissed."

Outside, the two big soldiers turned to Sergeant Sullivan. "Don't he ever forget anything?" Big John wailed. "Does he have to hang something on us every time we get near a town?"

"That I can take," Tony raved. "What curdles me is him expecting us to believe that fairy tale. Making out like somebody might put a grab on his contralto."

"Yah," Big John supported. "From what I see of contraltos, most of 'em could lick half the guys in a tank outfit. Who does he think'd be dumb enough to sucker for that yarn?"

"You," Tony said; "but that don't make it any better. What do we do now, Sully?"

"Meet the lady at 1800, show her the less repulsive sights, and arrive here promptly at 2030," the little man explained.

"But Sully, that means we spend our first night in camp listening to this female hog-caller."

Sully tapped the envelope against his teeth. "The Colonel said we could use the weapons-carrier," he smiled. "And at exactly 2031 we should be pushing back toward Naples."

"Nice timing," Tony grinned.

"Yah," Big John beamed. "The Old Man oughta know he can't shoot those curves at us."

Sully's eyes narrowed. "I don't suppose it has occurred to either of you apes, that the Colonel's story might be true," he said.

"You mean these tank guys might actually make a play for this dame, Sully?" Tony asked.

"Barring investigating officers, and police officials, have you ever known the Old Man to lie to anybody?" Sully demanded.

"No," Tony admitted. "And that could make things kinda different."

"Exactly," Sully said. "Allow for a little exaggeration, and we're still liable to have some fun between now and 2030."

"The crust of them monkeys," Big John stormed, "thinking they can put the finger on our canary."

"Let's go," the little man said. Contemplating the fallacy of hasty judgment, he moved briskly toward the motor pool. They'd bring this singer back all right, but the Old Man would have to move pretty fast if he expected them to listen to her.

SULLY doubted that the tank battalion would do any more than beat their gums. Yet like all members of the regular establishment, he knew better than to discount the ingenuity of the American fighting-man. And in the unthinkable event of failure, Kindly Kenneth was not a man to bear his pain in silence.

"One thing about the Old Man," Big John said: "he sure knows who the solid citizens are. Hey, what's Paddy doing in the weapons-carrier?"

Vaguely apprehensive, Sully watched his First Sergeant climb out of the oversized jeep.

"Ah," the First Sergeant said, "the favored ones! Get in, lads, she's ready to go. And don't worry about seats for the show tonight. The Colonel has reserved 'em, right next to me."

The little man looked at John and Tony.

"Right next to me," the First Sergeant mumbled. "As if I didn't see enough of your ugly faces. But I can't complain, Sully. The Old Man is good to me. I have his word of honor, that if anything goes wrong tonight, he'll save the second bite for me."

Nosing the weapons-carrier out of the pool, Sully reviled himself for underestimating his commander. Compulsory attendance at camp shows was not customary, but it would have been more flattering if the Colonel had simply ordered their appearance.

"Imagine him giving us that song and dance," Tony growled.

"Yah," Big John said. "What do we do now, Sully?"

"It's a long time until 2030," the little man said. Ignoring their mumblings, he drove in silence, the loss of their first free evening causing him less suffering than the galling realization that he'd believed the Colonel's story.

Rolling through the streets of Naples, he coddled his resentment, while John and Tony gazed sullenly about them.

But entering the Via Roma, Sully made mental apology to an astute commander. Maybe the Old Man did add a fancy touch or two, but—

"Look sharp," he snapped, his fingers tightening on the wheel.

Directly across from the Special Service office, a tank lieutenant stood by a jeep, a tall noncom beside him. Beyond the jeep three burly sergeants of the tank battalion dangled their legs from the tail-gate of a four-by-four, while farther down the street a chubby member of their outfit leaned against a building.

"So the Old Man didn't dream up that yarn," Tony said. "Looks like defense in depth, huh?"

"Sit tight," the little man said, carefully parking the weapons-carrier.

With a parting word to the noncom, the Lieutenant moved warily in their direction.

To a less devious mind this maneuver might have held a certain bafflement.

Sully grinned. "The pay-off," he said. "He isn't sure whether we have an officer with us or not."

"And if we did?"

"This is the busiest street in Naples," Sully whispered. He could fill it with M.P.'s in sixty seconds."

"Does he start a fight with another officer, they'd give him fifty years," Big John protested.

"Don't be crude," Sully said. "A good traffic-stopping argument would do it."

"Even then they'd both be hustled out of sight," Tony objected.

"Exactly," Sully said. "Then the boys in the four-by-four would take care of us, they think. And after a decent interval that tall lannigan would show up at Special Service with a nice tale about a change in plans."

"But we aint got any officer," Big John persisted.

"Substitute the tall boy for that lieutenant, and you still have the same plot," Sully said. "Get out."

"Going somewhere, Sergeant?" the tank officer inquired. "Or could that be a military secret?"

"Oh, no, sir," Sully said, "we're just doing an errand for Colonel Hendricks."

"I am sure your Colonel does not expect the impossible," the officer said. Smiling, he waved toward the tall noncom. "There," he said, "is the toughest G.I. in Naples."

"Uglier'n hell, aint he?" Big John conceded. "Does he bite himself, Lieutenant?"

Ignoring John, the officer spoke to Sully. "In addition to Sergeant Hafey, there are three more men in the four-by-four. Shall we say you've been outnumbered, Sergeant? Or are you addicted to heroics?"

Very nice, the little man thought, noting that no mention had been made of the reserve, the chubby soldier placed just beyond the four-by-four. "I'm shocked, sir," he said. "I never thought I'd see an officer involve himself in a public brawl."

"You don't think I'll be here, do you?" the Lieutenant scoffed. "Sergeant Hafey!" he called.

The tall noncom came forward, and the boys in the four-by-four got to their feet.

Sully signaled, and Tony moved behind the Lieutenant.

"They don't seem amenable to reason, Hafey," the officer said.

The tall one scowled.

"We'll take care of that, sir."

"Lookit, Sully," said Big John. "Look how fierce he is. Make a face for Sully, will you, Sergeant?"

"I'm Truck Hafey," the tall one rasped, "and I'm taking you first. Better get going, Lieutenant."

"Okay, Hafey," the officer said. "I'll see you about—" Blood drained from his face. Eyes popping, he struggled tentatively. Then, body rigid, he bit his lips.

Idly Sully wondered why all officers weren't smart enough to leave this sort of thing to their enlisted personnel. After all, the Lieutenant couldn't afford to attract too much attention. And only one truly desperate could hope to go anywhere, while the seat of his pants was held in Tony's grasp.

"HOW disgusting!" the little man murmured. "A public brawl about to start, and you, sir, standing right up in the middle of it."

"Leave him loose," Hafey roared. "I'll tear your—"

"Shut up!" the Lieutenant snapped. He glared at Sully. "So, you'd lay hands on an officer?"

Sully raised his brows. "An officer? Oh, no sir, a pair of trousers. And rather disreputable ones, if I may say so, sir."

"You'll rot for this," the officer fumed, while Sergeant Hafey quivered in his wrath. "Tell this—this man to let go of me!"

"Of course, sir," Sully said. "Just as soon as Sergeant Hafey rounds the corner in that four-by-four, Tony will lose all interest in your garments."

"I'll strangle 'em, sir," Sergeant Hafey offered.

"Get out of here," the officer blazed.

"Yes sir," Hafey moaned. "But I'll be seeing you guys."

"Aint he wonderful, Sully?" Big John said admiringly.

As the four-by-four roared round the corner, Sully noticed that the

chubby soldier had made no move to join his outfit. He shrugged. No harm in overestimating an opponent.

"Remember me?" the Lieutenant sputtered.

"Tony," Sully said, "you may return the Lieutenant's trousers."

"In twenty minutes I'll be standing before your commanding officer," the Lieutenant breathed. "Perhaps you know what will happen when I open my mouth?"

"I do, sir," Sully said. "I've seen second lieutenants open their mouths in front of Colonel Hendricks. It's very embarrassing. No words ever come out. Good-night, sir," he called affably, as spinning on his heel the Lieutenant walked stiffly to the jeep.

"That was a pretty good dodge they tried," Tony said.

"Yah," Big John agreed, "but they should 'a' known they couldn't slip that kinda stuff by me."

"By *you!*" Tony choked. "Why, you big—"

"Skip it," Sully said. "We're late."

"IF it aint for the Old Man outfiguring us, I'd say this wasn't such a bad detail," Big John said, as they crossed the street.

"We still have to listen to the dame, don't we?" Tony growled.

Sully frowned. It was true that so far their assignment had been anything but boring. Still the Colonel needn't have been so cagy. "It's a long time until 2030," he said, reaching for the letter. . . .

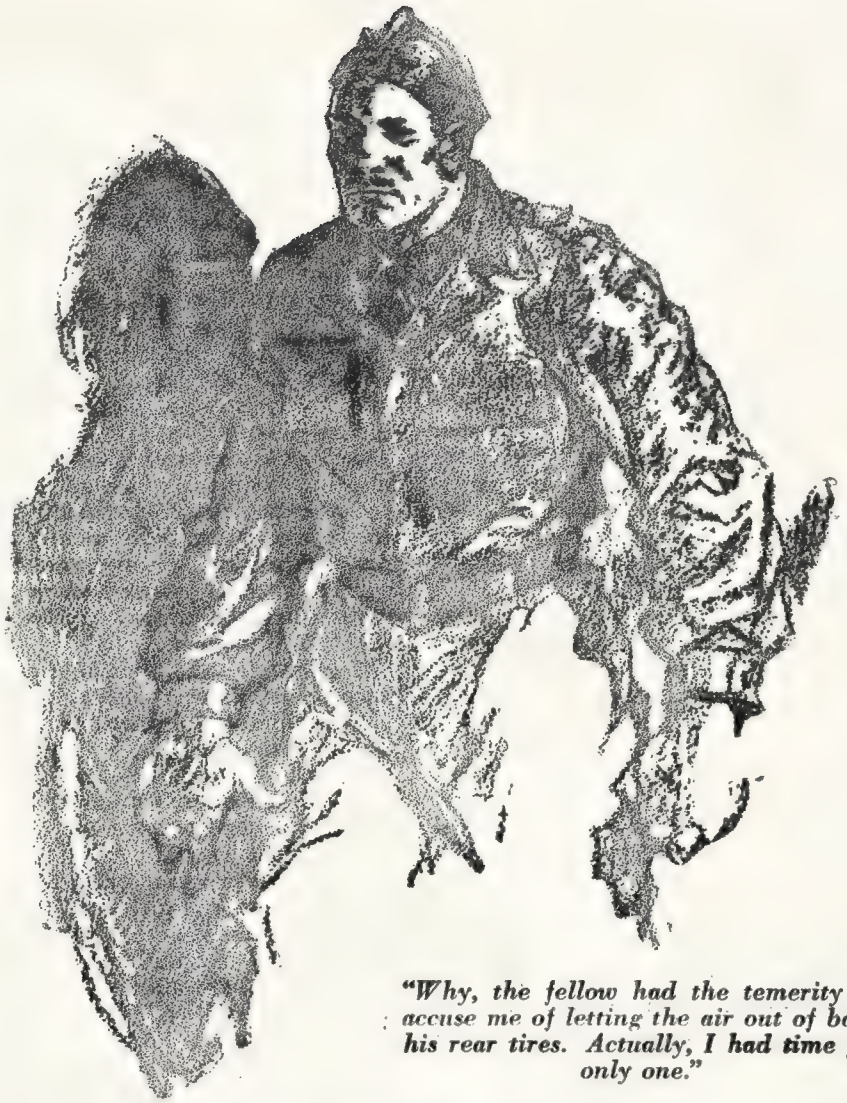
The Special Service Officer read the introduction twice. "It's customary to send an officer," he said, scanning them without approval.

Feeling that the absence of a commissioned escort could hardly justify so much annoyance, Sully considered their appearance. The clothes the quartermaster had furnished them did look as if they'd been pressed with a hot rock. But they were clean.

He stared at the officer's sharply creased pinks. "If these Anzio ensembles are bothering you, sir, you can check our credentials with Colonel Hendricks," he suggested. "The extension is Midnight-4."

"I don't like your attitude," the officer said, but picking up a phone he confirmed the little man's suspicions. "Midnight-4," he said. "Colonel Hendricks? Special Service calling. I'm afraid you misunderstood about the escort. Really, I can't—"

Ducking wildly, the Special Service officer held the instrument at arms' length. For while a punctured eardrum will get you by your draft board, it's only an occupational hazard once you're in. Managing four "Yes, sirs" before Kindly Kenneth hung up, he replaced the receiver, his fingers trembling noticeably.



"Why, the fellow had the temerity to accuse me of letting the air out of both his rear tires. Actually, I had time for only one."

"I trust the Old Gentleman wasn't unusually vulgar," Sully said hopefully.

The Special Service Officer crossed the room, fumbled with a doorknob, and disappeared.

"There aint nobody like the Old Man," Big John said soberly. "And that coulda been us, if we hadn't outsmarted those tank guys. What d'you think she'll be like, Sully?"

"About a hundred and ninety ringside," Sully guessed. "With a heart of gold, and teeth to match."

"Sully," Tony warned.

A glance at the girl who smiled at them from the doorway convinced Sully that he'd missed a splendid opportunity to keep his mouth shut. The hat she wore was on a level with his eyes—a hat like a dab of whipped cream on her honey-colored hair. Nor did the padded shoulders of a pastel coat add greatly to her tiny figure. She laughed, and a pleasant tingle danced lightly up the little man's spine.

"The Special Service officer's had some sort of a shock," she said. "So we'll just introduce ourselves. I'm Gerry Felton."

Sully bowed from the waist. "Sergeant Sullivan," he murmured. "May I present Sergeants Ross and Milano?"

"The Old Man couldn't 'a' known about this," Tony said.

"I say a lot of harsh things about the Old Man in my time," Big John said. "But I gotta give him credit. When the Old Goat thinks of love and romance, he also thinks of me."

"He thinks of you, he's having a nightmare," Tony said.

"Shall we go?" Sully suggested, smiling his approval of Gerry's ready laughter.

She nodded gayly. "It's good to be with you boys," she said. "You never change. Our Allies take their resting pretty seriously. But with you boys, it's still anything for a laugh."

"Yah," Big John said, "aint it the truth? Why, just awhile ago a bunch of comics try to ring one up on us."

A neatly worded understatement, Sully thought. Even in their book tank crews were not classed as comics. Taking her arm, he followed John and Tony to the door.

"Sully," Tony said, "maybe you better take Miss Felton back inside for a minute."

Big John moved quickly, and Sully saw the forgotten member of the tank battalion standing on the sidewalk.

"Gerry!" the chubby soldier called, ducking under Big John's arms.

"Tubby!" she screamed, and Sully remembered that the Old Man had said something about a former accompanist.

"How perfectly wonderful," she bubbled. "Boys, this is Tubby Walters. He used to be my accompanist."

"Nice knowing you, fat boy," Sully acknowledged. "Good-by, now."

"Oh, no," she pleaded. "Let's take him with us. You'll just love Tubby."

The little man could feel no stirring of the tender passion. "You don't quite understand," he said gently. "Blubber, here, is a tank man; we're doughboys. As a combat team we do very nicely, but our social relations are a trifle strained."

"Oh, please," she begged, appealing to John and Tony.

"Aw, Sully," Tony said, "we don't catch things easy. And maybe Fats'll come out to the camp and play for her."

"Yah," Big John supported. "Off-key Nolan is the only guy in our outfit who can beat a box, Sully, and you know how he fakes his bass."

Sadly the little man witnessed the complete disintegration of his stout companions. But conceding that the acquisition of a good piano-player might be worth some sacrifice of principle, he temporized. "How about it, Fat?" he asked, wondering why nature always endowed the well-fleshed with such guileless faces.

"Sure," Tubby said slowly, "I'll play for Gerry."

"You can sit in Tony's lap," Sully said. "Let's go."

"You won't be sorry," Gerry promised. "Tubby's good for a laugh a minute. He'll kill you."

THOUGH doubting this, Sully found the fat boy's talent for backseat driving worthy of a plug.

"Swing around the Via Roma," Tubby directed. "I want Gerry to see the place. Look it over, Gerry. Saturday night in a county seat, huh?"

Amazed at the change, Sully cruised along the Neapolitan Broadway. On their last visit the town had been dirty and rubbish-covered, but now it had some of the tawdry shimmer of Cairo. Night-clubs studded the street. He caught a glimpse of waiters in tailcoats.

"Disappointed?" he asked her.

"A little," she said. "It's like any amusement strip back home."

Sully nodded. "Hungry?" he questioned.

"Sure she's hungry," Tubby cut in. "But she don't want to eat in any of these sucker-traps. Turn left at the square. I know a swell place. Best ravioli in town, and simply lousy with color."

"Did anybody ask you anything, Fat Boy?" Tony demanded.

Gerry laughed. "Depend on Tubby to know the best places," she said. "It sounds exciting. Can we go?"

The little man shrugged. "Why not?" he said. Following Tubby's directions, Sully thought of the careful measures the Old Man had taken to insure their presence at his show. Obviously the Old Boy hadn't seen Gerry Felton. Sully grinned. Too bad they had to let him think he'd outmaneuvered them.

"Sully," Tony said, "we're getting into the wrong end of town."

Aware that they'd left the Via Roma well behind them, Sully looked about him. Frowning, he recognized the area: a place of crooked streets, and oddly tilted buildings. "Where to, Fats?" he snapped.

"Straight ahead. Next block. The place on the farther corner."

"What?" Big John roared. "That joint? That's Luigi's."

"It's the Club Luigi now," Tubby said. "You wouldn't know the place. Got a piano and everything."

"Sorry," Sully said. "But we can't take Miss Felton to a trap like that."

"Luigi's gone legitimate," Tubby insisted. "You don't think I'd take Gerry to any deadfall, do you?"

"Of course he wouldn't," Gerry said. "Come on, shall we?"

"It could be all right, Sully," Tony said.

"Yah, Sully," Big John said. "Luigi might even be glad to see us. We always paid for everything we broke."

The little man stared at Tubby Walters, but the fat one's eyes were wide, his manner bland.

Parking the carrier, Sully looked up at the second-floor window of the Club Luigi. On their last visit loud voices had sounded from that open casement. There'd been a stamp of feet, the hollow thump of falling bodies. Tonight they heard the tinkle of a piano, a subdued laugh. "Let's go," the little man said.

Taking Gerry's hand, Tubby led the way up steep stairs. "This is going to be fun," he promised.

A large door swung inward, and Luigi bowed before them. "Welcome, my friends," he said, his scarred face split in a smile that widened when he saw the little man.

"Hiya, ginzo," Big John greeted.

"Now this is really something," Gerry said.

Puzzled by the apparent lack of patronage, Sully scanned the layout. The place *had* changed. A single lamp hung from the ceiling, its soft glow lighting the dried fruits that trailed from the rafters. The four tables in the main room were clean, and tastefully arranged. A waiter rose from a piano that nearly filled the small room fronting on the street.

"Sit where you wish," Luigi said, but he made no offer to guide them to a table.

"Come on, Gerry," Tubby said. "We'll do a number."

She sat beside him on the bench, and he ran his hands over the keys.

"Maybe this guy is worth his nuisance value," Tony said. "That's a real piano, Sully."

Behind them the door slammed shut, a bolt shot home.

"Don't look now, doughboys," Tubby called, "but I think you've got some company."

EVEN before he looked, Sully knew what he'd see. Cursing himself for the grandfather of all half-wits, he glanced from Luigi's nasty grin to the four men the tavern-keeper had concealed behind his open door.

Sergeant Hafey moved toward them, while his followers fanned out across the entrance.

John and Tony took battle positions on either side of their small companion.

"Hold it," the little man said softly, his eyes on Sergeant Hafey.

"You can relax," Hafey grinned. "I aint mad any more."

"Nice of you," Sully conceded, his analysis of the situation unaffected by the degrading knowledge that he'd been guilty of appallingly poor reconnaissance. For despite Hafey's rather dramatic show of force, the fact remained that with Miss Felton to consider, neither of them could afford a fight.

But fighting men do not underestimate each other. And as Hafey rocked on his heels, Sully's faith in this face-saving theory dwindled.

"We owe you guys one," Hafey said, "but it'll have to wait. Right now, play nice and we'll leave you sit here awhile and listen to Tubby and Miss Felton."

"And if we don't?" Sully stalled, certain that only a man with an angle could be so sure of himself.

Hafey grinned triumphantly. "One wiggle," he said, "and Tubby takes Miss Felton out to the four-by-four while me and the boys bounce you gravel-agitators around the walls."

"The four-by-four?" gasped Big John.

"It's around the corner," Hafey said. "We figure doughboys'd never see anything, if it wasn't right under their nose."

"Sully," Tony growled, "my ears are getting tired."

"Yah," Big John said. "Maybe a quick slap in the kisser'd straighten this monkey out, huh, Sully?"

"Shut up," the little man said, his stomach crawling with self-reproach.

Tubby stroked the keys, and Gerry sang.

"Terrific, aint she?" Hafey said. "You guys gonna be smart?"

Vainly Sully tried to shut out Gerry's throaty voice. To face Kindly Kenneth without her was unthinkable. Yet unlike the tank crew, they had no noncombatant to rush her outside at the first hint of open combat. There was an out, but his soul shrank from taking it.

No man in the Fifth Army would move a hand to stop her going, when, and with whom she pleased. But if they took this out, would the war last long enough to live it down? Afraid to look at John or Tony, he turned his back on the remnants of his pride. "Suppose we let Miss Felton decide just who she'll leave with?" he mumbled thickly.

"You're kinda late on that one," Hafey jeered. "Tubby's been helping her make her mind up, ever since you came in. He says she's a great one for laughs. And if this aint funny, neither is Mussolini."

Tony lowered his head. Big John's feet shifted slightly. "Sit down," Sully ordered, waving them to a table. He stared at Sergeant Hafey. "We'll let Miss Felton make her own decisions," he said, turning on his heel.

But his last hope withered before her bubbling gayety.

"Tubby's told me how you boys outsmarted his outfit," she laughed. "That was really super. It's a shame you didn't know that Tubby was their hold-out."

"And don't pull the sympathy routine on Gerry," Tubby said. "She's one gal who thinks just like a man."

But in his heart Sully knew that Gerry was no more deserving of this phony masculine compliment than any other woman. Sadly he realized that to her they were small boys grown large, their blustery squabbles amusing, but surely not important.

"Suppose you play something, Tubby," she said reprovingly. "I'm sure Sergeant Sullivan can go along with a gag as well as anyone."

A BRAVE illusion, the little man thought. "We'll stay awhile and listen," he said. "D'you mind?"

Her smile, and Hafey's grin were things to be remembered. Quickly he rejoined his friends.

"What do we do now, Sully?" Big John asked.

"I don't know yet," the little man said, watching Hafey assemble his followers at a corner table.

"Can I bring you something?" Luigi purred.

"Yah," Big John said. "Your ears, on a platter."

"The Special Service officer's had some sort of shock," she said. "So we'll just introduce ourselves. I'm Gerry Felton."

"And, ginzo," Tony promised, "we'll be in tomorrow night to eat 'em."

A satisfying commitment, but it brought the little man no pleasure. For the scathing comments of the tank crew burned against his ears. Bitterly he reviled himself. Any sergeant in the outfit might have stopped the tank-men's first clumsy effort. But he alone had the arrogance to count a skirmish as a victory. He glanced at Hafey, and the tall noncom waved mockingly.

"So he's got a lousy noncombatant to take care of Miss Felton," Big John raved. "I wish she was outside for about three minutes."

"What good'd that do?" Tony demanded. "We couldn't tangle her up in any street jam."

His fingers tingling, Sully gave thanks for these his chosen companions: Stout citizens who never overlooked the elementary. Solid men who clung grimly to the basic issues while he wallowed in his injured pride, and abased himself for trifling with the Colonel's confidence.

For John had voiced their joint desire, and Tony told its weakness. As usual they were both half right. Hafey's strength depended on displacement of his forces. An insurmountable advantage—if maintained.

The tank officer had referred to Hafey as the toughest G.I. in Naples. Such titles are held by those who seek them, the seeker running high in sucker blood. The little man smiled thinly. "Let's go," he whispered, pushing back his chair.

"Look, Truck," a tank-man scoffed, "here comes the short."

Sully winced. "Leaving soon?" he asked.

"Who wants to know?"

"We do," Tony said.

"Oh, so you want to make some trouble for Miss Felton?"

"Of course not," Sully said. "What's done is done. You boys really outmaneuvered us on that deal."

"Then what's it to you when we leave?"

The little man looked at John and Tony. "We'd hate to think we wouldn't be seeing you again," he drawled.

"Change of plans," Sully said, helping Gerry from the truck.

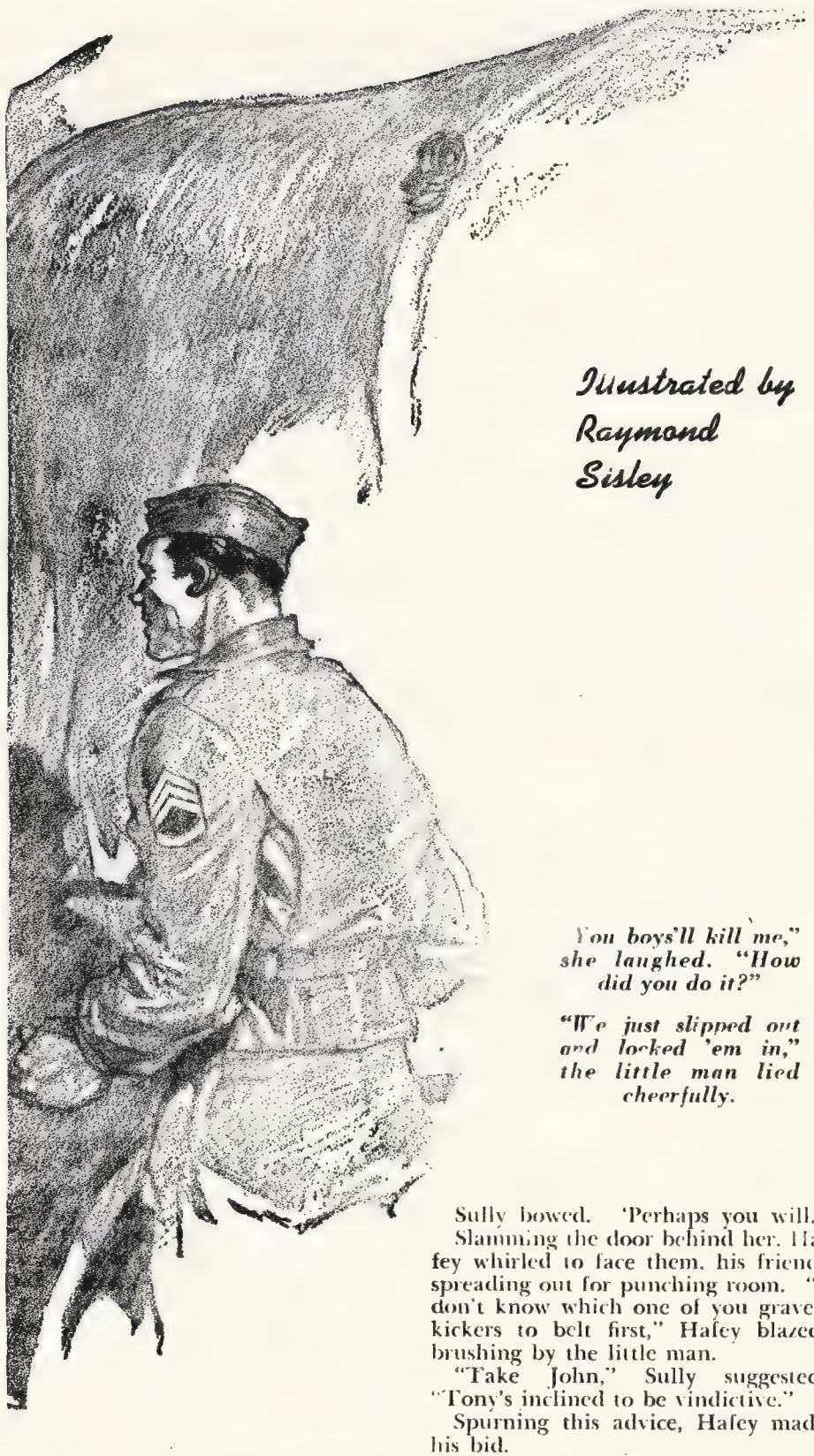
"Any time," Hafey offered. "Any time at all."

"Any time?" Sully questioned scornfully. "That's about what we expected. We figured you'd be pretty anxious to get away, once you had Miss Felton outside."

Turning his head, Big John expectorated sharply—an indelicate gesture, but effective.

"Boilermakers," Tony scoffed.

"Let's go," the little man said contemptuously, turning toward their table.



Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

"You boys'll kill me," she laughed. "How did you do it?"

"We just slipped out and locked 'em in," the little man lied cheerfully.

Behind them the tank-crew scrambled to their feet, Hafey's hoarse command rising above the mouthings of the others. "Tubby," he called, "you and Miss Felton get going."

Tony grinned. "This," he said, "is special service."

"Good night, boys," Gerry smiled. "I hope I'll have a chance to sing for you sometime."

Sully bowed. 'Perhaps you will."

Slamming the door behind her, Hafey whirled to face them, his friends spreading out for punching room. "I don't know which one of you gravel-kickers to belt first," Hafey blazed, brushing by the little man.

"Take John," Sully suggested. "Tony's inclined to be vindictive."

Spurning this advice, Hafey made his bid.

"A nice left," Sully conceded, watching Tony roll with the punch.

"So-so," Big John disagreed, his right arm shooting up to block a burly soldier, his long left looping out to spear another.

The one tank-man not engaged danced nimbly round the swirl of flying fists. Finding no opening, he turned to Sully in scowling disappointment.

"Shall we dance?" the little man inquired.

The tank-man hurled a hook at Sully's head—a nice hook, well intended. But ducking swiftly, Sully drove his noggin up to the ears in his opponent's stomach.

That tank-man hit the floor in a dead heat with Big John's first attacker. Nor were they long alone, for Tony drove both hands to Hafey's body a heartbeat before John's Sunday shot smacked dully on the last combatant's chin.

"Watch it," Sully warned, looking up just in time to see Luigi's charge.

Pivoting sharply, Tony beat Big John to the punch.

"Let's go," Sully said, moving toward the door.

"Where's the waiter?" Big John growled.

"Musta scrammed," Tony said. "Some ginzos are smart. Come on."

Big John could not deny his vice. Seizing Hafey with one hand and Luigi with the other, he jerked them to their feet. The big one's arms swung wide.

"John!" the little man yelled.

In one practiced motion, Big John brought his hands together, a head in each. "I can't help it, Sully," he said. "I gotta hear 'em ring."

"Let's go," the little man snapped.

POUNDING down the stairs, they took the corner at a run, and Tubby's yelp choked short as Tony dragged him from the four-by-four.

"Change of plans," Sully said, helping Gerry from the truck.

"You boys'll kill me," she laughed. "How did you do it?"

"We just slipped out and locked 'em in," the little man lied cheerfully. "Let's hurry, shall we?"

She sat beside him in the carrier, while John and Tony wedged Tubby in the back seat between them.

"This'll get you nowhere," Tubby fumed. "I don't beat the box for any doughboys."

"Oh, Tubby," Gerry said, "don't be so childish."

"Tony," the little man suggested, "suppose you have John remonstrate with him." Gunning the motor, he trusted that its roar would muffle all unpleasant sound. . . .

"You can ease off, Sully," Tony said. "John and Tubby made a deal."

"Yah," Big John cut in. "Tubby's gonna play."

"He didn't need to be so stubborn about it," Gerry scoffed.

"Oh, well," Sully said, "John's going to do something nice for him, sometime. Aren't you, John?"

"Yah," the big one beamed. "I'm gonna let go of his ears."

Sighing comfortably, the little man relaxed. For even Kindly Kenneth would call that special service.

Crystal Evidence

A cantankerous police technician handles a crime in his own way.

by Donald Barr Chidsey

CLAESSEN tilted the jar, and thousands of tiny bright specks tumbled toward its lip, where they hung poised, as though eager to be spilled out. Perhaps it was the angle, or some trick of light brought about by the jar walls, but in any event the specks at that moment suggested tiny unpolished diamonds crudely cut, or diamond chips: each seized the light it could get and with amazing strength hurled this back prismed into flecks, iridescent and lovely—green, violet, red, blue—that wavered on the walls and ceiling.

"To think," Claessen muttered, "that those little things might send me to jail, ruin my career."

He straightened the jar, and the particles leveled neatly and without sound, like sand; they became demure again; the walls and ceiling once more were dark.

"—Send me to jail, ruin my career," repeated Claessen, fascinated.

"What do you expect me to do?" rasped Aleck West. "Burst into tears?"

Aleck fitted the laboratory, which after all was his, conceived by him, stocked by him—much of it at his own expense. There among the test-tubes, retorts, Bunsen burners, acid baths, precision scales—there where the air stank of chemicals—the crippled little wizard was not grotesque but was perfectly at home, a master. His goatlike countenance, his slits of eyes, his long nervous hands, his scanty figure as he hobbled about—for he had a clubfoot—were what you would expect of the inhabitant of such a chamber.

Easily the most modern-minded member of the Ridgeton police department, nevertheless in the laboratory—from which he seldom stirred, and where he worked so fiercely and in such jealously guarded solitude—he appeared to be a medieval necromancer, a magician among magical and terrifying pieces of apparatus nobody else understood.

The cats heightened this illusion. There were always cats in the laboratory. The one narrow window, which opened upon an alley, Aleck habitually and in all weather kept a little open, so that the cats could come and go; and he, who himself seemed never to have time for eating, fed them faithfully. Even now, while Aleck and the large bland Claessen faced one another across the table, a tomcat dropped with the slightest of thuds from sill to floor; with tail superciliously high, it prowled past the bale of cotton into which Aleck West in his capacity as firearms expert was wont to shoot pistols and rifles, and from which he would pry the bullets for examination; it poked whiskers into the darkroom, the door of which was ajar—and instantly turned away with a low indignant throat-sound; at last, after a solemn loping run across the floor, it leaped to Aleck's lap. Here, confidently and with an air of ownership, it curled up in lordly fashion. Aleck stroked it; with the other hand he reached for a hard candy. He was extremely fond of hard candy, and there was always a jar of rock candy or a box of peanut brittle somewhere in the laboratory.

"It was good of you to see me, Sergeant."

Though the tomcat did not purr, Claessen did. Claessen always spoke in a purring whisper, and always smiled. The whisper was natural in the dim fantastic office of the Identification Bureau—which this laboratory officially was—but Claessen would whisper anyway, anywhere: even in the courthouse corridors, and the corridors of City Hall, in lawyers' offices and ward clubrooms, in the noisy part of Police Headquarters which lay beyond the door of Aleck's sanctum, where men by tradition and old habit bellowed at one another as they thumped one another's backs or pumped one another's hands—even in those places Claessen whispered. He was a whisperer by nature, a conferrer in doorways and in corners, who seldom spoke in the presence of more than one other person. He was large, smooth, well fed, well dressed, and his nails glittered. He should not be called sinister, and it is probable that he was not inherently evil, but he was a man of many secrets—indeed one to whom secrecy was the very substance of life's own breath. He was an office-holder: that was his profession. He knew everybody, and almost everybody knew him, and a few even liked him a bit. He dealt in favors, and prospered. Ever since anybody could remember, and no matter which party was in power, George Claessen had been Commissioner of This or Deputy Commissioner of That, or perhaps (though he was almost illiterate) Chief Clerk of Such-and-Such Court—positions that paid well, kept him out of the limelight, called for very little work, and best of all supplied him with favors to trade. If he was not notably efficient, he had kept clear of scandal. No doubt he took graft, but he was cautious and not too grasping; it was what an old-time politician

"Look at me, Sergeant," Claessen said. "You're going to get me those glass fragments—the right ones!"

would call honest graft, legitimate graft.

"Why'd you want to see me?" snarled Aleck West. "If you hadn't finagled to get that C card, you wouldn't be in a jam like this."

"You don't like me, do you, Sergeant?"

"No."

Claessen was still smiling, though a whit sadly, when he drew from a pocket a large silver flask. He slid a cup from the bottom of this, and pouring liquor into it, held it toward Aleck.

"Have a drink?"

"No, thanks."

Claessen drained the cup in a neat swift gulp, and afterward dabbed at his lips with a silk handkerchief.

"I'm a bit nervous about this business, naturally."

"You should be."

"Messik tells me the identification by that bystander could be questioned; after all only the last number of the license was seen, and there are thousands of cars whose number ends with a nine. And I broke the headlight putting the car away."

"You ran her down and drove away, and you know you did!"

Claessen did not deny or affirm this accusation, and seemed not to have heard it. He took another drink. He did not show the drinks except by a faintly heightened pinkishness of face; yet there was anxiety in his eyes.

"Messik says it might go bad with a man in my position, at a time like this, if—if the courts decide against me."

"It certainly will! Hasn't it ever occurred to you that the public is sick of tinhorn politicians who dash around with C cards—especially when they kill old women and then drive on?"

"I am entitled to a C card," the Commissioner retorted with some dignity. "I am obliged to do a great deal of driving."

"At seventy miles an hour?"

"As I understand it, a certain number of fragments of glass were picked from the person of the unfortunate victim. Now if this glass can be proved to come from the broken headlight of my car—"

"Then you'll be good for six years, anyway—which isn't enough," Aleck finished. "Guys like you ought to be sent up for life."

CLAESSEN looked hurt, but he still smiled. Aleck scowled at him. There was nothing unusual about this. Aleck West treated all outsiders in this manner. His disagreeableness was no pose, nor was it a by-product of indigestion; rather it was the result of his pushing, pauseless impatience with the inefficiency and stupidity he found around him. In Ridgeton he was almost a myth. He shunned publicity; and when he appeared in public at all it was fleetingly, attended always by

First Grade Detective Cassidy, his errand-boy, adorer, and self-appointed bodyguard. Mostly Aleck stayed in the laboratory, performing miracles. It was not often that he admitted a man of Claessen's type. He had been known to kick out the Mayor himself; and the police chief, big Marcy, was notoriously afraid of him.

"You've been pulling wires for three days to get here. Now what is it you want?" Aleck demanded.

"To think," murmured Claessen, his gaze on the small jar of crystals near the flask, "that such a little bunch of stuff could mean so much—"

"Never mind the poetry! You came to find out what my report's going to be, didn't you? Well, my report will be confidential, it will be official, it will be complete—and it will be honest."

"I'm sure of that, Sergeant."

"I hope you didn't come here with the idea of trying to bribe me?"

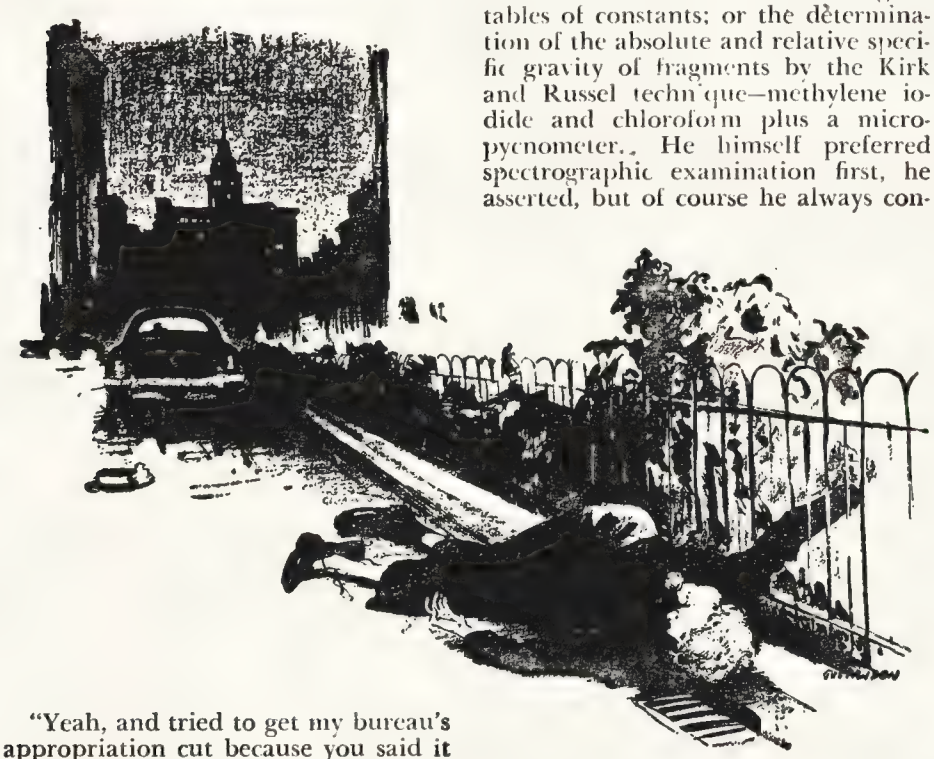
"Good Lord, no!"

The man meant it. He was not clever, but neither was he a fool, and just now he was very eager to make Aleck West believe that bribery had never been intended.

"I only thought, Sergeant, that since we used to be co-workers—"

"Huh?"

"Well, I once served as Assistant Commissioner of Police—"



"Yeah, and tried to get my bureau's appropriation cut because you said it was a lot of tommyrot!"

"I was badly mistaken there, Sergeant. You have done wonders for the department, in your own way—wonders! Your reputation as a criminologist is nationwide. Ridgeton is proud to number you—"

"Now that you've got that off your chest," interrupted Aleck, "will you please tell me why in hell you're here?"

"Well, it's too much to hope that you'd give me some idea of the nature of your report? Yes, I thought so. But I wonder if you would be good enough to tell me if it is possible for science to say that certain small fragments of glass came from a certain larger piece?"

"Practically anything is possible to science nowadays," pronounced Aleck West. "Of course, it depends on who does the job."

His lack of modesty was as celebrated as his clubfoot.

"But could you explain—it doesn't seem possible to me—could you explain, in such a way that I'd understand?"

"Not in such a way that you'd understand, no." But was the irascible little man touched by pity? His lip curled. "But anyway, I'll try."

He leaned back, stroking the tomcat, and he talked about the identification of glass fragments. His voice did not rasp now; he made no effort to be impolite. When he worked or discussed his work, he was no longer jumpy. He was a different man then—cold, dry, precise, a thinking-machine, an infallible filing-case of knowledge.

So, nasally and without emotion, he talked of the refractive indices of silicates; of Winchell's and Wright's tables of constants; or the determination of the absolute and relative specific gravity of fragments by the Kirk and Russel technique—methylene iodide and chloroform plus a micropycnometer. He himself preferred spectrographic examination first, he asserted, but of course he always confirmed this with an examination of the actual physical properties of the fragments. He referred to the experiments of Donovan, Morris, Camot and Mason, and quoted from papers by Tryhorn, Gamble, Burd.

It was a lecture crammed with polysyllables and immense fractions. Though he did not look at his visitor as he spoke, Aleck did attempt, with some patience, to make it clear that not only did the glass from one factory differ from that from another, and not only did successive batches made by the same formula show variations due to slight imperfections of measurement, but to the expert even different parts of the same batch might often vary in composition and physical properties—because of volatility which tended to affect the surface disproportionately, the nature of the crucible and its age and previous history, inadequate stirring and mixing, variations in heating, and so forth.

"Glass is just glass to you," he finished, sneering, "but not to me."

THOUGH few of the words themselves were clear to George Claessen, who heard them for the first time, their hugeness and the impressive manner in which they were spoken, together with the circumstances, the atmosphere, had stricken terror to his soul. Yet he continued to smile; and after swallowing twice, he even forced a note of enthusiasm.

"Sergeant, you're a wonder!"

"Yes." Aleck gently lifted the tomcat to the floor, and rose. "Well, now I wish you'd get out. I've got work to do."

He started toward the darkroom, but did not enter this. He stood a moment in thought, his back to Claessen. Then he returned to the table. Claessen was pouring a drink into the flask-cup.

"My God, Sergeant, you've got to take a drink on that! A splendid piece of work! Ridgeton is honored by having a man so—"

"Oh, all right."

Aleck took the cup and drained it. He put it upon the table. He sat down again; and the tomcat, annoyed at having been disturbed, promptly returned to his lap.

Claessen's smile was not mechanical now, but resembled a grin, and his eyes danced maliciously.

"I don't mind telling you, Sergeant, that if you'd played your game right you could have convicted me. Because I did hit that woman, and killed her. I can say that now. I'm even glad to tell somebody—somebody who won't be in a position to pass the confession on. And of course the evidence is gone."

Aleck stroked the tomcat.

"Don't gloat," he rebuked. "You're not half as smart as you think you are." He slipped a small mirror from the pocket of his black alpaca coat. "You think I didn't see what you did when my back was turned?" He nodded toward the empty cup—and the

empty jar. "I had expected something like that."

The tomcat began a determined belated purr. There was no other sound. Aleck West nodded again to the jar which had held the crystals.

"That was not the evidence in your case, that stuff I just swallowed. I never told you it was. I simply left it in sight, and you jumped at the conclusion."

He stroked the cat, looking down at it, and his hands were marvelously gentle.

"Look at me, Sergeant."

Aleck looked up. Claessen had drawn a small blue automatic pistol. He did not point this at Aleck, but his thumb clicked off the safety-catch.

"You're cleverer than I thought you were, Sergeant."

"I always am," coldly.

"But you're going to get me those glass fragments—the right ones! You must have them here somewhere. You wouldn't trust them with anybody else. Now get up and get them for me!"

He waggled the automatic.

Aleck rose. He had not anticipated this, had never associated George Claessen with guns, and hadn't realized how desperate the man was. Moreover, Claessen was frightened—which made him the more dangerous.

"You're going to shoot me," Aleck asked slowly, "right here in Police Headquarters?"

"I'm going to if I have to. If you don't get me those chunks of glass—the right ones. Who'd pay any attention to a shot in here, anyway?"

It was true. Aleck often fired guns in this room, in order to examine the bullets and the firing-pin and breech-block impressions. Also, Claessen knew that Aleck had so emphatically forbidden all unauthorized entrance into this laboratory, even interruption in the form of knocking, except in matters of the highest importance—that hours and even days might pass before the crime would be discovered.

Claessen was not smiling now. His face was no longer pink; it was dead-pale, and glistening with sweat.

The tomcat, sore as hell, disgusted with the whole business, leaped to the windowsill and disappeared.

ALECK, raising his hands, moved backward slowly, away from the sofa, the bale of cotton, the darkroom, and toward an end of the laboratory where bottles were ranged, dim and dusty, on shelves.

Claessen followed. He did not point the pistol directly at Aleck—but he held it firm.

"Of course I ran down that woman. But if you think I'm going to let a little squirt like you send me up for manslaughter—"

"To think," Claessen muttered, "those little things might send me to jail."

First Grade Detective Cassidy was a large man—not fat but certainly not tall—and bulky; and when he stepped from behind the bale of cotton it was as though the biggest amoeba ever seen under the most powerful microscope ever built had conventionally reproduced itself by halving. Yet the tomcat itself never moved more lightly. Cassidy made not a sound.

All the same, George Claessen must have sensed the presence behind him. He started to turn—and the blackjack descended upon his wrist. Afterward they learned the wrist had been broken; but as Cassidy said, "Why not?"

The pistol was hair-triggered. It went off, once; but it fell. A bottle was smashed, and the stuff it had contained splattered from shelf to shelf and to the floor through the very echoes of the explosion. At this instant, Cassidy threw himself upon George Claessen.

"Hey!" cried Aleck, all jittery again, all nerves. "That was the only hydrazide-hydrochloride that I had made up!"

Chief Marcy barged out of the darkroom, followed by a police stenographer whose pad was covered with shorthand. Another police stenographer rolled out from under the sofa. Marcy, all pink and perspiring, burbled with solicitude, fussing around Aleck like a mother hen around a chick; and presently Cassidy too, whose business with Claessen had been brief, was doing the same.

A stomach-pump! They must get a doctor and a stomach-pump! The emergency squad must be called! Aleck must lie down!

"Stop screeching!" screeched Aleck West. "You half-wits have the same idea Claessen had—that ground glass is a poison. Well, it isn't! Anybody who knows anything about toxicology can tell you that!"

But it could cut his stomach! It could lacerate his intestines! Once again they started to call the emergency squad; but Aleck stopped them.

"Get out of here, you apes! You got your oral confession, didn't you? I told you there weren't enough fragments for even me to identify that glass with the glass from Claessen's car, and that we'd have to let the guy convict himself, didn't I? Well, what else do you want?"

But—

"Stomach-pump? Think I want to lose the best drink I've had in months? Matter of fact, I guess I'll take another!"

His hands like swift white birds, he plopped two lumps of rock candy into a mortar, and with a pestle crushed them into glittering crystal specks. He poured the specks into the flask-cup, and poured whisky on top of them. He swished this around, held it up.

"Stomach-pump!" he muttered in deepest disgust. "You don't get rock-and-rye like this very often. You want to keep it down!"

He did.

A Hundred

THAT was eighteen years ago, he thought. Or sixteen. If he could remember which grade he'd been in, he could count back. It was the year he had hit his first buck; he remembered that. He had held high and trailed and got a shot in the ham; and his father, waiting on up the ridge, had killed the buck when it came jumping past him. But the bad shot had spoiled a lot of meat. Lord, that seemed far back there in the past. It made him feel old. . . .

Martha appeared beside him and rested her hand gently on his shoulder to look down at him for a moment before she spoke. She was solicitous and deeply worried. She said: "Can you go on now, dear?"

He grunted shortly and did not get up. He knocked out his pipe in the snow and watched the moist flakes of tobacco turn the snow yellow, small spreading stains marking where each bit of dottle fell. The snow was soft and fluffy and feathery on top, incredibly white and bright; and beneath that top layer was the hard crust that would almost, but not quite, bear your weight, so your foot would plunge through it at each step and send you knee-deep in the old snow below it. Your foot always went through just as you were thinking that this time the crust would hold you up, and so it always managed to throw you off balance, and every step was jerky and laborious; and then there would be places where it would bear your weight. That was to keep you in doubt. It was the worst kind of footing, and with his useless leg it was almost impassable. He didn't want to start on at all, but he would, in another minute. He rubbed his thumb over the bowl of his pipe, watching the oil from his skin bring out the grain of the briar, and then he put the pipe away in his pocket and drew on his mittens.

"I was thinking of the time you broke your arm," he said to Martha. "How old were you?"

'Oh, gosh, that's my earliest memory. I think I was three. We'd really better be going on."

"I used to hate you when you were a little kid," he said. "I'd never have thought I would marry you."

"Mmmm, I know." She smiled, without covering the anxiety and worry. "But you did. Try to stand up now."

He got up, leaning heavily on her. "This reminds me of it," he said. "Of the time you broke your arm. I heard you yelling and came over and carried you into your house."

She said: "Does it hurt now?"

"No. It hasn't hurt for an hour. It's numb. My foot's numb. My leg's all right, but the foot's just numb."

"Don't try to walk too fast."

"I can go along all right. I hate like hell to do this, that's all."

"To do what, dear?"

"Have you carry me like this."

"I couldn't carry anything in this snow, silly. You have to get up to the cabin somehow. I'm not such a frail reed you can't even lean on me, am I?"

They went on haltingly, staggering against each other. They reached the bottom of the slope and started up the next hill, picking their way between stunted pines heavy with snow. Perry lurched against one and jarred a shower of snow down his neck. He swore dispiritedly.

Martha said quickly, in a gentle voice: "Do you want to stop and rest again?"

"Hell," he said, "we haven't made a hundred yards!" But he stopped, breathing heavily and after a minute he looked down at Martha beside him. She was standing with her eyes closed, getting her breath, and he saw that her face was white with fatigue. Her arm around him was trembling. Why, he thought with some surprise, she was all in! He had been right: she wouldn't be able to make it. How far had they come by now—a mile? Three more to go, at the least. Not a chance! Not any kind of a chance. He had been right to begin with.

He reached out to the tree near his shoulder and supported himself by it and drew away from her and she roused herself and said brightly: "Ready to go again?"

"Listen," he said. He wet his lips with his tongue. "You'd better go on by yourself."

"Oh, Perry, are you going to start that again?"

"You could get down to Milo's and get back with his team and sled before we'd make another mile this way."

"Don't talk about it, Perry! I won't leave you! I told you I wouldn't, and I won't!" Her voice was shaking and she stood taut and stiff in the red and blue ski suit, her fists doubled tight at her sides.

He leaned heavily against his tree, watching her without emotion. He shook his head. "No," he said. "You'd better go on, kiddo."

"I tell you I won't! Not if I have to carry you! Do you think I'd—"

He raised his voice and said loudly: "I'm not going to die. I'll be okay here. I just can't make it any farther, that's all."

She put her arms around him. "But I m afraid to do it, Perry. I'm scared to death to leave you."

He patted her shoulder awkwardly with his mittened hand. He said again: "It won't kill me. I think it's stopped bleeding. I feel pretty good when I keep still."

"But you might freeze, just standing here. Your foot might freeze."

"It won't be so cold. You'll be back with Milo's team before dark. I can move around a little."

She held herself close to him and whispered: "You'd better be all right, or I think I'd—" She sniffled and said: "Don't listen to me, darling—I don't even know what I'm saying. I'll hurry. I'll hurry all I can." She left him quickly and went on up the hill, floundering through the crusted snow, and was soon out of sight among the pines.

PERRY let himself down in the snow. It was restful and warmer than standing. He was tired—Lord, he was tired! He wondered if it would really be possible to die from this thing, a bullet in his foot. It didn't sound like much, a shot in the foot. There was that buck he and Charley Otis had killed that time. Before they got him down to stay, they had hit him nine times and he had fallen down a hillside, running, and every bone in his body was broken. If it hadn't been for the hill, why he'd be running yet. Just a little spike, too, a little cuss.

He would get his boot and sock off after a while and look at his foot and see if it had stopped bleeding. His boot had been full of blood when Martha had taken it off to bandage his foot with their handkerchiefs, and he had left a red trail in the snow at first, when they started walking, but that had gradually faded out. He didn't know if his foot was wet or not now, or cold or bleeding. He couldn't feel anything in it. But he thought the numbness seemed to be creeping up his leg. In a minute he'd get the boot off and see how it was. He'd have to rest some first. He was too damned tired for any exertion right away.

Hours a Week

THE story of George, who liked only George; and of Bonnie, who was a valuable horse; and of Martha, who looked like summer people; and of the man who worked a hundred hours a week.

by William Brandon

He fell again to remembering the way Martha had looked when she had come running through the snow and found him, after the shot. He couldn't forget the way she had looked. As if she had expected it to happen! That was a delirious, sick thing to be thinking. But he couldn't get it out of his mind. He couldn't get rid of the feeling that it was true. The way she had looked; he had never seen anyone look like that before. As if she had shot him herself, but was shocked at seeing him actually fall. . . . Hell, he was crazy. But she had expected him to get in a fight with George. She had said so.

"I knew it would happen, I knew it—" While she was crying and kneeling in the snow and trying to tie the handkerchiefs on his scarlet, smashed foot and bind its shapelessness into something that could be put back in the sock and the boot. It had been

hurting then, pain that had blinded him, and he didn't know, now, just what he had heard; and then he had blacked out for a minute when she pulled the sock and boot back on. It had felt better after that; and later it had turned numb, and now there was no feeling in the calf of his leg up to his knee.

Martha had said: "I knew you would fight, I knew you would, as soon as you had left." And she had sobbed with that grief and despair and horror, as if she had done it herself, because it had been George Vickers—and George was still what he always had been to her. . . . He was getting delirious now. No mistake. George Vickers and Martha, and ten years, and ten cows, and Bonnie, and all these things were mixed together and tumbling over each other in his mind; he sat up desperately and pulled off a mitten and got out his familiar pipe. . . .

"A clever beast," the blacksmith said.

Martha had been a long time before Bonnie, but George Vickers had always been there. There had been other horses than Bonnie, and ten years ago in the Chester show Perry had ridden Mr. Lauck's hunter in the knock down and out. He had been a junior then. The hunter had been green too. Kayak. . . . Kayak. Mr.

Lauck always had a lot of luck. He had sold Kayak down in Washington, D. C., for fifteen hundred dollars. A wonderful hunter, but why should a hunter make a good jumper? Not for the knock down and out. But they had won it that year, he and Kayak. He could still feel the kick he had got out of that. They had beaten Captain Tory, and that was when Sky High had been at his best.

Kayak. Irish hunter. Mr. Lauck bought him from an army officer in Canada. Middleweight, handy as a pocket in a shirt, the map of green Ireland on his black hide. No—hell—Kayak had been the big blood bay. What the devil was the matter with him? Green but willing. Sweetest mouth in the world. Willing—all heart. They had won the knock down and out, and that night he had spent the prize money taking Martha to the dance at the Abenaqui House, and there had been a kid there from Connecticut with his parents, and his name had been George Vickers, and he hadn't seen much more of Martha the rest of the summer.

They had looked good together dancing. They were both black-haired, and their teeth flashed when they smiled at each other, and George was lean and brown and Martha was slim and golden; Martha was beautiful and George was handsome. He had supposed George's people were rich, for George wore clothes like a millionaire's son. But they weren't. George happened to have a knack for clothes, like Martha. . . . Martha looked like summer people, even yet. In the summer she wore a scarf tied around her head, and a peasant skirt, or she wore overalls when she helped with the chores, and she still looked like summer people. She had her old jodhpurs to wear when she rode Bonnie. But George hadn't looked so good this time. . . .

There were ten cows. He milked ten cows. Then there was the young stuff, and the bull, and Bonnie. There was always Bonnie, and always the price it cost to keep her, the money it cost to keep her, and always the knowledge that Mr. Lauck had offered one thousand dollars for her. There was something wrong, vitally wrong, in this thing of exchanging horses for money and exchanging money for horses, so that it would bedevil you.

HE saw the pipe in his hand, found his tobacco, and filled his pipe and lit it. The bones in his arms were heavy and hard to move. There was a throb in his leg above the knee, and he moved, and the throb ran clear up into his side and sent a wave of sickness over him. He puffed hard on his pipe and moved again, and attempted to judge where in his leg the throbbing stopped and the numbness began. He would have to get his boot off. Probably his foot or his ankle was swelling. But there would have to be something to wrap around his foot to keep it warm. It was getting colder all the time. He could tell it in the pinched feeling around his eyes and nose. . . .

Martha had been in New York City to become an actress; he was riding in the National that year, and he had gone around to her apartment as soon as he had got in town and could get away from the stables under the Garden.

The library had got her a job with a bookstore, and she was working at it, living in New York and trying to get on the stage.

"Perry, Perry, wonderful Perry!" And she had kissed him. Not like any way she had kissed him before, up home. This was New York. This was freedom. She had a one-room apartment, overlooking a Nedick's and a newsstand and a Lexington Avenue bus stop. She was more beautiful because she was different, because of that freedom, and that hint that you didn't know what might happen. This was New York. Anything could happen.

So he had gone inside the apartment, and George had saluted him with a cigarette.

"Howdy, cowboy," George said. "Is he in training?"—to Martha, hesitating about mixing a drink for Perry.

"You should have told me you were coming," Martha said. "I'm just getting ready to go out with George."

"There's always George," George said. "But I can't afford any seats at the National.

"George is working in town," Martha said. "Isn't that swell? Here I was, and I didn't know anybody. Golly, Perry, in the National! Tell me all about it!"

He had told her all about it. He had told her Mr. Lauck was giving him the job managing his string. It was a good job for him, as young as he was. And he had bought a two-year-old American saddle filly.

"*Bonnie,*" Martha said. "That's the prettiest name. Is she going to be good?"

So he had told her about Bonnie. He had sat down to talk about Bonnie; he could talk all week about Bonnie. Chestnut, that was going to dapple, perfect conformation promised; he happened to have a snapshot with him. She was stretching. He didn't know what it was—there was something about the filly that got him. He hoped to get some colts from her later on, by Mr. Lauck's Sir Brian.

He was still paying for her; she had come high. Yes, breedy head. Beautiful head. Yes, really up. Yes, short back. Looked like a Morgan back, didn't it? And clever. John Argus, the blacksmith, had stood and looked at her for an hour and a half. "A clever little beast," he'd said. Clever little beast. Lord, yes, she was more than he could afford. But he would make something out of her. Finest thing in New England. Absolutely nothing in New England to touch her.

"I hate to break up this touching business," George had said, "but we're due out of here."

"Oh, my, yes," Martha said. "Perry, when will I see you again?"

IT was strange that this was the same Martha who was Martha now; it was strange, too, that it was so easy to know that it was the same, because Martha was always the same. . . .

"What did you go to New York for? You didn't want to go on any stage. Did you go down there to see George?"

"Oh, to see George." She had laughed. She had thought he was kidding about it. He would never be that jealous again; there was only one time you felt jealousy like that. When it was a twelve-point buck, and you had it in your sights and Charley Otis fired first, from on up the ridge, before he was supposed to. . . . It wasn't jealousy; it was anger. He would have given his half-interest in hell to have creamed George, but George wasn't the kind of a guy. George was a good guy. George was a swell guy. Always a good guy. If you have to be sore, get sore at Martha. George isn't doing anything. Perennial good guy, George.

You say, "George, get away from Martha. Keep away from Martha." George would say, "Good Lord, son, I didn't know I was moving in on you. Good Lord, son, take her, with an old man's blessing. Martha's a darned nice kid—I like her; but good Lord, I wouldn't cut in on you two. Take her with an old man's blessing. Bless you, my children."

"To see George?" Martha said. "Oh, Perry, George is married. Didn't you know that? He married a Conover model. I want to see Bonnie."

"I've got something else besides Bonnie," he said. "I bought Chad Fuller's farm."

"Perry, you didn't?"

"I didn't have anything to spend my money on. Mr. Lauck wants me to work for him again this summer, but I can get stock and tools from the bank, and I'm afraid to let the place go, or the fields will run down. Chad's got them in good shape. I thought I could raise a few horses after I get straightened around. Bonnie's worth four figures right now. So if I run into trouble, she can always lift the mortgage."

"You wouldn't sell her!"

"I hope I never have to."

That was the whole thing: To have one thousand dollars gleaming in that dappled chestnut, when you wanted to go in town to the show and couldn't spare the sixty cents; when the window blinds in your house were paper, and the paper tore and hung down in a long patch, and you couldn't afford twenty-nine cents for a new paper blind; when your harness broke, and you mended the mended leather and mended it again; when you couldn't meet the grain bill, and couldn't afford new roofing, and sold the Italian forward seat Mr. Lauck had let you have at a bargain, because you didn't have time to use it, and because you couldn't afford expensive (ninety cents a year) saddle-soap to keep it in the condition to which it was accustomed! And always to have a shining thousand-dollar bill eating feed and forage, and needing time for schooling. God had created a beautiful mare, yes, a thousand-dollar bill. A thousand dollars in gold. A thousand dollars would put them in the clear, get their heads above water. But the farm had been for Bonnie; that was the funny thing about it.

"Good Lord," George had said when he showed up at the farm last week, "this is a beautiful place! Good Lord, but you've got a view!"

"What's the matter with you, George?" Martha kept asking. "What on earth is wrong?"

"Nothing," George said. He looked as if he'd been on a week's drunk. His overcoat was dirty, and the collar was ripped. He wore somebody else's galoshes, and they were too large for him. "Nothing. I just came up to congratulate you happy people."

"We've been married for ages," Martha said, "and we've never heard anything from you." She was looking at him closely, and he turned suddenly, smiling handsomely, and looked back at her, and her face turned pink and she dropped her eyes.

"I've been busy with my grief," George said. "My own happy marriage didn't work out." He went on smiling at Martha. . . .

Perry opened his eyes now, and the snow was not as bright as it had been. The sun was setting. His pipe had fallen out of his hands, and he looked at it, far down there on the snow, and didn't bother with moving to reach for it. He moved his lips and stretched his mouth wide open and closed it, feeling the stiffness travel up the muscles under his ears. A wind was whispering across the hill, quartering against his face, and he would like to have his back to it, but it was not worth the effort. Little eddies of snow spun along in the wind, and he became dizzy with watching them.

"Money? You've come to a bad place, George. We're trying to make a go of this place, and we're dirt poor."

Illustrated by Maurice Bower

"Money?" he had said, and he and Martha had looked at each other. "You've come to a bad place, George."

"Look," George said. For the first time in his life, George seemed to be uneasy. "This isn't any ordinary business. I'm in trouble, and—well, you folks were the only ones I could think of that I thought were my friends enough to— I've got to have it. A couple of hundred bucks, then. I've got to have that much. I'm telling you I'm in trouble."

"You don't understand, George. We're dirt poor. We're trying to make a go of this place, and we're dirt poor. Even when we make a go of this place, after a couple of hundred years, we'll still be dirt poor. You don't get rich dirt-farming. The only chance we'll ever have of making an extra buck or two is raising some good horses later on. . . . A good horse will bring you four figures. If it's a good foal and doesn't come out crippled or weak behind, and lives, and doesn't get sick and die and doesn't injure himself, and develops properly, and doesn't form any bad habits. . . . A good horse will bring you a thousand dollars.

"It's this way, George. We'll be frank with you: We've got four dollars and something in cash right now. I'm milking ten cows now. My milk check averages around one hundred and ten dollars a month. I work a hundred hours a week. I get up at four-thirty in the morning and go to work, and I get done about seven or eight at night. I've got my wood to get up in the winter and sugaring in the spring and haying in the summer, and there isn't any help to be had even if I could afford to hire help.

"We have a hundred and ten dollars a month, and out of that we pay expenses, groceries, repairs, can rent, the vet, grain bills, keep up the barn and machinery, and pay for raising young stuff. I keep our car running by buying old parts in junk yards and putting them in myself. Martha's bought one store dress since we were married. And right now we've just bought a sugar place up above Milo Jones'. We bought it through the bank, and I'm going to cut over it; and maybe, after I crowd in two winters' work up there and get out the logs and yard up the tops, I'll make enough to be able to pay off a chopper and still have a hundred dollars left over. That's the way you get ahead up here. I'm not complaining, George. I couldn't work any place else but on a farm. Maybe I could go work in a war factory now and make four times as much in half the time, but I couldn't work in a town. Anyhow, some day we're going to be raising horses here.

"I'm milking ten cows now, George. I'm working one hundred hours a week, and I've been working that way for a long time, and I'll be working that way for a lot longer time to come. The Government would like for me to be milking twenty cows instead of ten, because there's a shortage of dairy

Possibly George believed Perry had decided to turn him in. . . . He had grabbed the rifle and fired wildly.

products, but I haven't got any more hours to spend. And the Government wouldn't really want me to, George, because the Government speaks of a fourty-hour week and a world of leisure, and only the other day the Government withdrew the order freezing farm laborers' wages at anything under two hundred dollars a month—and that's the first time I've laughed about money in my life, George. Maybe they're creating a peasant class, with inequality between groups, and if they are, I guess I'll be a peasant. Those of us that stay here stay because we like it, that's all. And of course a farmer always eats well; you know all about that. He can grow his own food; so here we grow potatoes, and we live on them all winter. They're very nourishing, but I'm afraid Martha will get fat before she's very old. If you lived here, you'd notice that all the farm kids have bad teeth. Farmers always eat well, you know about that. But as for money, George, we just don't have it. We don't really use money, George. We just work for the bank and the Government, and that way we've got security."

"I'm sorry," George said. "I didn't know. I was—pretty desperate, I guess, and I didn't know where to turn. I couldn't think of anyone I'd trust except you people. If you haven't got it, you haven't got it."

"You'd be welcome to it, George. But we haven't got it. But we'll be

glad to put you up as long as you want to stay, George. Help you any way we can. But there's no money, not milking ten cows."

They had never asked him what he was running away and hiding from. They didn't know yet. They never would know. Martha had felt deeply sorry for him, he could see that. Martha had been frantic because they couldn't help him; that had been evident.

"It's too bad, honey," he'd said. "I hate to see George in trouble. If we had some money, we could stake him, but we haven't got a dime. The only way we could raise any money would be to sell Bonnie, and I wouldn't—"

"What sort of trouble could he be in? Perry, you don't suppose he's been drafted into the Army and deserted? Or maybe even—murdered someone. Oh, he couldn't have done anything like that. George isn't very well balanced, but he's not the kind—"

(Yeah, George is a good guy. We wouldn't turn George in. Not for anything short of treason. George is a good guy. But if he looks at you like that again I'll wring his neck, like I've been wanting to do since that night we went to the dance at the Abenaqui House. And if you blush again when he looks at you, I swear to God I'll kill him. Oh, we wouldn't turn George in, not even if he's a good old Army deserter, and I expect that's what he is. George only likes George, and good old George isn't strong on the guts, and I expect he would dislike the Army a great deal, where they also probably work a hundred hours a week.)

He had been gone the next day from chore time to chore time, up on the mountain to the sugar place they had bought, tramping through the snow, cruising the timber; and when he had got home, George had been talking about going on to some place, and how he could get to the highway on the other side of Jordan without going through town.

"Why, the sugar place," Martha said. "You can go up there with him tomorrow morning, Perry, and show him the way crosslots to the highway. You'll have to walk eight or ten miles, George, and it's all woods, but you certainly won't see a soul. Milo Jones is the only person lives any place near there, and if you happen to see him on your way up, you can say you're going hunting, or something."

SO it had been arranged. George had seemed anxious to get away; and that was strange, because George was safe enough there with them, out on their back road. Perry didn't understand until he went out to do the evening chores—and found Bonnie was gone. There were the tracks of a van in the barnyard snow, and the mare's blanket and cooler were gone with her.

He stood by the stall and wondered at himself for not going in the house and doing what he wanted to do; and then he went ahead and finished his chores, and when he did go in, he did not speak of it. It was not Martha's fault. Martha had to do things by the way she felt, and he had always known how it was between Martha and George, and he had only tried to fool himself by not admitting it.

Still, he had marveled at himself and the coolness with which he could look at them. Martha had been uneasy and silent, with frightened eyes, he had noticed; and the next morning when he had started out with George, carrying his old .38-55, she had suddenly decided to come with them as far as the cabin on the sugar place. Then when they had reached the cabin, she had been reluctant to stop there, but the snow was crusted and the going was hard, and finally she had left them and dropped back.

He had begun to feel better then. He hadn't wanted Martha to see what he was going to do; he hadn't wanted an exhibition. Only the satisfaction of a whipping, that was all, but a whipping that would honestly release the painful anger, break the icy coldness in his mind, restore to him his wholeness.

It had only a detached connection with Martha, and that would be later, in another life, when Martha could settle what she wanted to do. When he would be able to feel a hurt and loss. Now he couldn't.

He had insisted he would go four or five miles with George, to show him the way, and he had paced them off until he had reached the place he had set; and then he had stopped and told George simply what he was going to do. He didn't know whether George had understood him or not. Possibly George believed Perry had decided to turn him in. At any rate, he had not fought. He had grabbed the rifle and fired wildly, turned to run a few yards and whirl and fire again, and the second time the cartridge had missed fire. The ammunition was old. Cartridges were expensive, and you couldn't afford to shoot up many rounds a year. Then George had run away, carrying the rifle, and disappeared. The first shot had hit Perry in the foot.

Martha had been there within five minutes, so she must have been still following them, and so she must have been expecting it. . . .

Martha bent over him. She was crying. "I'm all right," he said.

He opened his eyes to see her more clearly, and the snow was glowing softly, without a glare, and someone was picking him up, and he heard Milo Jones' voice rumbling, but he couldn't make out the words. He didn't see the sled, but he felt himself being placed in it, and felt it sliding over the snow, tilting, crunching through the crust.

"Milo brought some whisky," Martha was saying. "It's some whisky, dear. Try to drink it." For a moment he didn't feel the liquor, and then the warmth spread through him.

"I CALLED up the Sheriff from Milo's," Martha said.

"What for?" he said. His voice was hoarse from the whisky. Sometimes he could make out Martha's face beside him in the dusk, and sometimes he couldn't.

"George shot you, didn't he? Oh, I knew something would happen, I knew I should never have let you take the gun. I knew he was ugly. He's all different; he's changed. I was sure he'd do something just out of spite before he went, but I didn't want to be foolish, and—" She was working on his foot. "He's desperate about whatever he's running away from. He's simply crazy, he's so afraid; and that made him spiteful, and I should have had sense enough to— I can't—I'll have to cut your boot off, dear. Does your foot hurt now?"

He closed his eyes and said:

"What was George spiteful about?"

"Why, because we wouldn't give him any money. He started in on me yesterday while you were gone, and got around to talking about selling Bonnie so we could loan him some money; and when he kept at it and kept at it, I lost my temper and told him he had better leave. And then I was so scared he might talk you into selling her, that I had Uncle John come and get Bonnie to keep her until George left.

"Oh, he was saying he'd pay all kinds of interest, and swearing we'd get every penny back, and it was life and death and I don't know what all. And he can talk a snake off a limb, and I was sure he'd talk you into selling her, so I had Uncle John take her just in case. She's as much mine as she is yours, and I told Uncle John not to let you have her back until I said so. And I let George know what I was doing, too. It made him ugly. I knew he'd try to make some sort of trouble. . . . Oh, my hands, I can't make them work."

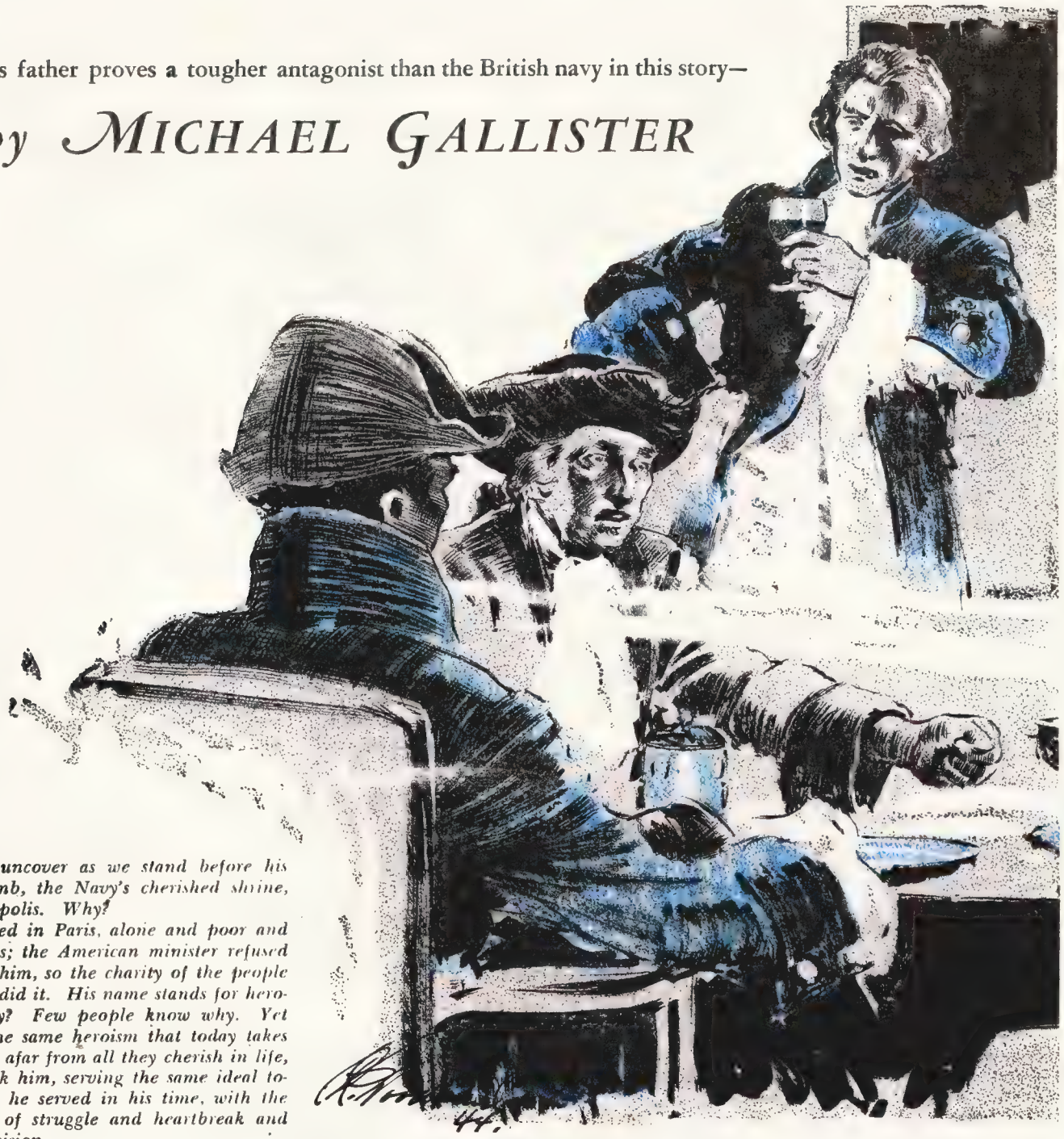
"Don't do that," he said. "My foot's all right; let it alone." He put his hand in hers and she was rubbing his fingers, restoring the circulation, as soon as she felt its coldness.

"There isn't any frostbite," she said. "I want to get that boot off."

"No," he said. "Just sit here."

A lady's father proves a tougher antagonist than the British navy in this story—

by MICHAEL GALLISTER



WE uncover as we stand before his tomb, the Navy's cherished shrine, in Annapolis. Why?

He died in Paris, alone and poor and friendless; the American minister refused to bury him, so the charity of the people of Paris did it. His name stands for heroism; why? Few people know why. Yet it was the same heroism that today takes our men afar from all they cherish in life, as it took him, serving the same ideal today that he served in his time, with the heroism of struggle and heartbreak and high decision.

THE Grove, it was named—Dr. John Read's quiet plantation-house in Hanover County, Virginia. It was a serene, pleasant place, for Read himself was a pleasant man and his home reflected him. A widower and the nephew by marriage of Dr. Benjamin Franklin, he depended much upon his friends and loved to have them drop in for a chat, as Dandridge had now done. The two men filled their long pipes with home-cured tobacco, and relaxed comfortably.

"I hear," said Dandridge, "that our old friend Hewes has been sent to the Congress at Philadelphia. A remarkably level-headed man, Hewes."

"And a Virginian at heart, though he moved to Edenton, over the North Carolina line, to manage better his shipping interests," Dr. Read assented. "Yes, he'll make 'em sit up, there in Philadelphia. I hear they do a lot of bickering."

Nathaniel Dandridge nodded. He was a fine clean-cut man in his forties, stern of eye and mouth, but an excellent manager of his broad acres. He stood high in Virginia, in this late autumn of 1775. His wife was the cousin of Mrs. Washington, and he himself was of good English stock and set much store by it.

"Hewes," he observed, "lacks the personal magnetism of my friend and

"I want him commissioned

neighbor Patrick Henry, but has a shrewd head. I'm getting off a letter to him from Fredericksburg about my tobacco shipments, and I may have to be in town a day or two on other business. This war is playing the very devil with everything, John!"

Read cocked an inquiring eye at him.

"Aye, but how does it affect you otherwise? You were a Captain in the British Navy before you settled in Virginia."

Dandridge grimaced. "Humph!" he rejoined. "That is an episode in my past life which were best forgotten

Alias JOHN JONES

Illustrated by Cleveland Woodward

a Captain," said Hewes.

at the moment, John. I'm a Virginian now; my sympathies are with my own people, here. My feelings are well known. Still, the war is bound to be a sad thing for us all."

"Truly said," assented Read. "Your good lady is well, I trust? And the charming Dorothea?"

"Quite, thank you. My friend, I want a word with you, in confidence, about this young fellow you introduced to us all nearly two years ago."

"Oh!" said Read, with a chuckle. "You mean young Jones."

"Right—John Jones. It's amazing how he has won friendship everywhere. Washington thinks very well of him, and so does Lee. So, I may say, we all do."

"I do myself," said Dr. Read. "That young Scot has really wound his way into my heart. I've seldom known a man with such charm and high nobility of character. I begged him to make his home here with me, but damme if he would. No, sir! He's at the trading business day and night—why, he's all over the place, down the Delaware and up the Rappahannock! Just now he's in Philadelphia."

"No, he's not," Dandridge countered dryly. "He's at my plantation. He stopped over there on his way back here to you."

Read lowered his pipe. "What! And he didn't come with you?"

"He'll be along in a day or two. He's casting up the yearly accounts for me. I must say, John, that I don't understand the fellow. He has settled down as a trader and merchant. His ambition, he says, is to become a planter, and he has even got his eye on a plantation he means to buy. Yet he's a seaman."

DR. READ nodded, a slight perturbation in his manner as though he could guess what was afoot.

"A good one, too; he had one of Hewes' ships for a time. But he's given up the sea completely, as I happen to know. And yet, who can tell? There's talk in Philadelphia that Congress may create a Navy. If so, Hewes might get John Jones a commission—"

"Come, come, John," broke in Dandridge: "you should know perfectly well what's in my mind. If a man is obviously paying his respects to my daughter, and she as obviously favors him, I want to know something definite about him."

"Yes, naturally," Read agreed, but not too happily.

"So I come to you, since you introduced this man Jones to Virginian society and are therefore responsible for him."

Dr. Read laid aside his pipe.

"You disturb me, Dandridge," he said slowly. "I know every circumstance of John Jones' life, but only in strictest confidence, because I've been as a second father to him these two years. I will vouch for his honor with my own."

"None stands higher, John," said Dandridge—a stern man but eminently fair in his dealings and outlook. "Because you stand sponsor for him, I do not term him a nameless rascal, a mercenary fortune-hunter, a penniless adventurer; he is sheltered by my great respect for you."

Read's heavy brows drew down. "Are you in earnest, Dandridge? I don't like what lies beyond your words and behind them."

"Nor do I. Is his real name Jones?"

"If he says it is, then it is so taken and accepted," said Read. "He came to me under the tongue of good repute—"

"Come, let's not fence with words," Dandridge said impatiently. "William

Jones of Fredericksburg was his brother, true. But it has come to me that neither the one nor the other had any right to the name, and that our friend was a Captain John Paul with a most uncommonly questionable past."

Dr. Read sighed, paused, emptied his pipe, and refilled it.

"Old friend, let me beseech you—move slowly! If John Jones is paying attention to Dorothea, you have every right to question him. Meantime, you admit that he is received as a gentleman by the best people. I vouch for him as such. Dr. Franklin thinks well of him; so does Washington. For nearly two years—"

"Aye, he's been known for nearly two years—and that's all," broke in Dandridge. "Before then? A shipmaster, a roving seaman, by his own confession; for all we know, a slaver or pirate!"

A slight gesture of agitation escaped Dr. Read. Dandridge caught it, and leaned forward gravely.

"John, did that hit the mark? Gad, man! This becomes serious indeed!"

More than true. In Virginia, although slavery existed, a slaver was held in the greatest abhorrence. There might be excuses for piracy, but there could be none for dealing in human flesh and blood. Read lifted his head and squared his shoulders, as though against invisible forces.

"Dandridge, for God's sake forbear to question me!" he rejoined. "You have no right. I have no right to answer such questions."

"John Jones, forsooth! The very name reeks of an alias!" said Dandridge. "I mean to pursue this matter; my honor and that of my family is at stake, John."

READ made an almost pathetic effort to defend the absent man.

"You should condemn no one unheard. Misfortune and injustice and circumstance have driven many a person into momentary disaster. Is it nothing that I vouch for Jones?"

"Up to a certain point it is everything, believe me!" Dandridge rejoined with obvious sincerity. After all, Read was not only an honest man, but deeply respected by all who knew him. Perhaps Dandridge repented his stern words, for he went on with warmth:

"Mind you, I like the man, I like him rarely! For your sake, I'll meet him halfway and even more. But there's another man who, I have some reason to believe, is interested in Dorothea."

"Oh! So sets the wind!" said Read.

"Aye. Mind you, there's nothing definite as yet in either quarter, nothing to be sure of thus far. But the other man is a friend, a patriot, a man of substantial worth. I refer to Patrick Henry—you know him well."

"What!" Read's head jerked up in astonishment. "Henry? Why, he's near double her age! He's a widower with half a dozen brats who run wild as savage Indians!"

"Patrick Henry, sir, is one of the most respected men in Virginia," Dandridge made retort. "What's John Jones, balanced against such a man? Can you answer me?"

Read was silent again, then shook his head. "No, I cannot; but he himself can, and I believe will."

"He will—and he shall," said Dandridge ominously. "However, let the matter rest, John; I don't intend to quarrel with you over it, heaven knows! Suppose we take a turn in the garden and let the crisp air blow away our worries. I must get on to Fredericksburg before dark, and shall spend the morrow there on business."

The morrow in Fredericksburg, however, and the morrow on Nathaniel Dandridge's plantation were very different things, and the honest planter might well have worried afresh had he known what was going on in his absence. For the John Jones who was on his mind so heavily, troubled Mrs. Dandridge not at all. He was not one to trouble any woman's eye—a small man, but alert and active, with a walk like the springy lithe tread of a panther, and a consuming merry energy that infected all who came into contact with him.

When he came downstairs in the morning and found her arranging flowers, he bowed over her hand like any courtier, and spoke with outrageous flattery, relieved by his quick smile and gay air.

"No need of asking if you slept well, Madam Dandridge! With that damask cheek—upon my word, I took you to be Dorothea!"

The buxom lady laughed into his sparkling eyes.

"Do you really think, sir, that any woman would believe that you could confound her with her own daughter?"

"Rarely, very rarely, madam. This is one of the cases where a mother, side by side with her own lass, might well bear off the prize for beauty and charm!"

"You'd scarce say as much in front of Dorothea," said Mrs. Dandridge shrewdly.

"I've told her so a dozen times. With your permission, madam, I'll repeat it to her face this very minute. She's in the garden, I think?"

"So you'd desert me for her, would you?"

Jones held up a cautioning finger. "Dear lady, worship you I dare not, for obvious reasons. In laying my respectful devotions at her feet, however, I but lay them at your own, as it were by proxy. Upon my honor, I'll bring her back to you demanding to know the secret of your charm! Adieu!"

He went out laughing, as she laughed after him; but his was light badinage, hers the affectionate, half-wistful pleasure of a woman who knows flattery to be untrue and yet relishes it with an old craving. In a word, John Jones was and ever would be popular with the ladies.

IN the garden, he stepped quietly along the graveled walks to where Dorothea worked in a sheltered nook at the last lingering relics of past summer. He was a very trim man, attired not richly but with great neatness, and his spry features softened at the sight of her. He came close, and surprised her, hands curving about her eyes.

"One guess!"

"John! You startled me!"

"God love you this fine morning, my darling!" He caught her fingers and brought them to his lips. She was very lovely, as she turned, alarm in her face—a sweet face, not too strong but quietly pleasant in every line, with adoration in her blue eyes.

"Not so loud! Will you never be cautious?" she chided him.

He laughed softly.

"Never. I don't know the word. Tell me quickly—is it true?" The words rushed out impetuously.

"Is what true?"

"What you told me last night—what echoed through my dreams like a benison from heaven: that you love me as I love you, Dorothea?"

She glanced swiftly about. "My dear, my dear, would you have me be indelicate, unladylike, uttering words by daylight that—"

"Yes, a thousand times!" he broke in with gay command. "Truth's the same by starlight course or sunlit chart; fear it not, shrink not from it! Tell me, lady of the sunny hair and the splendid eyes—is it true or not?"

A little flush crept up her cheek, a quick breath parted her lips, but she smiled.

"Very well. It's true," she answered. "I—I do love you, John, as you love me. But tell me—*how* do you love me?"

He kissed her fingers again. His laughter died. He looked steadily into her eyes for a moment, and strength gathered in his voice and his words came gravely:

"With all my heart and soul, Dorothea. With all my hopes, my future, with all I am and shall be—with a love as wide as the sunrise, as bright as the morning, as true and deep and eternal as the arms of the Creator! In a word, dear heavenly child—I love you and I worship you."

The ring of deep sincerity in his voice would have moved any woman. She wavered, she leaned toward him,

her arms might have gone out to him—but just then a slave came down the path, whistling, spade over shoulder. She straightened and the tenderness in her eyes was replaced by worry.

"Oh, if only words could drown all bitter things!" she murmured.

"What things?" Jones demanded. "What things? I'd drown them for you in a sea of glory!"

She shook her head. "No, no; John, I must talk with you seriously. Like a man."

"Not even a voice angelic, if clothed in your guise, could accomplish that miracle, my love," he began; but she broke in upon him.

"Please—none of your fine speeches! I'm in earnest; this is serious. I—I don't know how to begin, John—"

He stepped back a pace and made her a grave and courtly bow.

"Mistress Dorothea, you are the descendant of Governor Spottswood of Virginia, and me a poor 'umble seaman as knows my place. I salute you, and obey. Begin, if I may s[illegible]lvise, at the beginning."

"Will you never be earnest?" she pleaded. "Father talked with me before he left, yesterday."

"Oh! Then it *is* serious."

"Worse than that. I must say things that I shrink from saying."

Jones changed completely. His gay air vanished. The merry light died from his gray eyes; he seemed to become taller as he stood there.

"I know what they are." Even his voice was different, gravely quiet and steady. He knew too well what they were; he had feared and dreaded this moment, but now that it had arrived, he did not shrink from it.

"Yes," he went on, "I know; and you shall not utter them, dear heart. I'll say them for you, every one of them. First, then: 'Who is this man John Jones?' Shall I make my answer?"

"John, did that hit the mark? This becomes serious indeed!"

SHE was startled, even alarmed, until she realized his gravity, his quiet friendly poise, his lack of hurt.

"Yes," she said awkwardly. "Yes, my dear. I—I fear you must."

"Oh, it's nothing to fear!" he said, forcing a little smile. He kept his voice level, kept the fear out of his eyes—a hard task. "His real name is Paul, John Paul. He assumed the name of his brother, a rascal who called himself William Jones, of Fredericksburg, but who was also born to the name of Paul. There's the truth. Do you ask me why he took this name? Our man, I mean—John Jones."

His poise aided her to regain her own. After all, she was scarce twenty.

"My dear, I don't care why," she replied. "But—yes, I must ask."

Harder than ever, now, not to shrink. But he was not good at shrinking.

"He took the name of Jones for the very obvious purpose of hiding his own name of Paul—the name of a murderer, a pirate, a slaver."

There—it was out. It hit her like a blow; he saw the hurt in her eyes.

"John! Oh, you crush me!" she murmured. "It's not true!"

"But it is," he said quietly. "My dear, a man may be all daubed with mud, and yet be clean of heart."

Her eyes widened upon him. "You're not jesting?"

"I've never been so earnest in my life, nor ever shall be again," he said, almost sadly. The words came swiftly now, but they were heavy words, weighty with dark meanings. "I could not dare to love you, were not my honor as clean as crystal. I've made mistakes; what man has not? I sha'n't excuse them to you. Let me just say this, Dorothea: in all my life I've done nothing to cause me regret or shame."

For a moment silence lay between them. He could feel her gaze probing into him. She was not a very wise or very deep young woman; but she had the clean-springing, keen intuition of so many women, for truth or falsity.

"I believe you," she said, and held out her hand to him. "I believe you, John dear, and I want to know no more."

He took her hand, kissed her fingers again, and shook his head.

"But there's so much more to know—so much more you must know some day! And why did I come here? Merely to hide myself? No. As a boy of thirteen I came to this country and fell in love with it, and every day have fallen more deeply in love with it."

"You mean Virginia?"

He gestured sweepingly. "All of it; all in it! Now I'm here for two reasons: to clear up the past, and to upbuild the future. I'm earning enough money to employ a lawyer to clear my name—the name of John Paul. This done, I may or may not resume it. Yes, there's more to know; I'll face your father with the worst, and win him, I'm confident. When my name's clear, the future will be built up here, in Virginia."

"Then you'll not go back to sea?" she asked, as one who fears a rival.

He shook his head decisively.

"Never. I never want to see the ocean or tread a deck again. I've always had a consuming desire to settle down on my own farm, to have my own trees and land and home, as my people had in Scotland. It's not a mere longing, but a deep and passionate craving. I'm not one of your halfway men, my dear."

"No, that's true," she said quickly. "You're just the opposite—a man of fire!"

"Not that either, please God! I want peace, happiness, a home, love—things I've never had. The man who has never had such things, clutches for them greedily. Money? Be damned to it! Not that at all, but a home. You've always had a home—you can't appreciate what the lack of it can mean to a person."

IN this mood of self-revelation he was fascinating. Her eyes softened, tenderness crept into her voice.

"My dear, my dear, I do understand. How hard your life has been!"

"Bah!" Impatience shook him. He saw that she did not really understand at all; he wanted no sympathy. "Difficulties only exist to be overcome—like this one facing us. I shall overcome it, I promise you. I shall win your father over. I can do it."

"When he comes back?"

"No. I'm going on to the Grove. Dr. Read knows every detail of my past. I'll come back here in early December, when my business ventures are finished and I'm free. Then I'll settle everything with your father. But there's one thing more, dear heart. This country is fighting for freedom, and I sha'n't hang back."

"Oh! You'll go to the war?" she broke out.

He nodded. "I love this country, Dorothea. It's not just a pretty sentiment . . . it's like my love for you, a deeply burning fire! This country, its people, itself, all it is and may be—why, to me it's like the love of a woman! I'm not seeking anything for myself. I've found something here great and glorious, just as I've found you. I'd die for it, just as I'd die for you were there need to. It's a feeling beyond words, just as you are; it's an ideal, a thing of the spirit and soul, just as you are!"

The rush of his words had gripped her. She understood now, clearly enough.

"Do you love this ideal more than you love me, John?"

"I don't know." He looked squarely into her eyes. "Let's be honest about it. No one can understand this love for a country unless he's felt it. This ideal is greater than all else. Greater than my love for you? I'd not say that—yet who knows? It's like God in a man's heart—or else it is not."

She spoke impulsively, swiftly. "Stop, John! I—I don't want you to be *too* honest about it, too serious about it. I'll be content if you just love me!"

He smiled suddenly; the moment was ended, he was himself again, dreaming no more.

"To the last day of my life—I swear it, my darling! Well, I've made my confession to you. All I ask of fortune is to settle quietly down here in Virginia, far from the sea, and with you. But we must fight for what we get; I must fight with this country of mine."

"John, I'm not strong and brave like you," she said slowly. "I—well, I'm weak and afraid, especially of Father. He's a just man, but he's terribly stern too. I could be brave if I had you to make me brave, but without you—I don't know. Anything might happen. I need you, John—I need you so badly!"

"Please God, we'll have each other," he said quietly.

"But if you go to fight, in the war—if you go to sea—"

"Never, never, my dear!" he laughed lightly, confidently. "You know our friend Mr. Hewes, who moved down to Edenton in North Carolina and is now in Congress? Well, Hewes offered to get me into the new Navy they're talking about, and I refused. So that's that! If I do go, it'll be into the Army—and Mr. Washington will find a place for me."

So spake John Jones, little witting what brew was even then cooking on the fire in Philadelphia, where the very new Marine Committee of the new Congress was discussing an even newer Navy still in the throes of creation.

These meetings of the Marine Committee took place on chill and blustery November evenings at a tavern where Jamaica rum served to keep out the cold and to loosen hot tongues. There was nothing austere about these discussions. The committee had one member from each State, and every man was out for everything he could get; the only man who had any practical knowledge of ships and shipping was Mr. Hewes. When it came to commissioning the new officers of the new Navy, however, there really were fireworks.

"The proposed names on this list," said Mr. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, in his pleasant way of uttering scathing words, "are apparently all relatives or friends of Mr. John Adams and Mr. Stephen Hopkins."

"They're all New England men, eh?" put in Mr. Morris of Philadelphia, in a growl. "Hewes, what d'ye think of this, eh? Only Yankees in the new Navy!"

MR. HEWES pounded the table; dour John Adams expostulated: if the Army could be made a dumping-ground for all the Virginians who wanted brass buttons, then New England intended to have a say about the Navy. The discussion became what might well be termed acrimonious, until Hewes conferred apart with Robert Morris and then smoothly proposed a compromise.

"I'm sure," he said in his bland way, "we'd not want questions asked on the floor of the Congress as to why, for example, the Commodore and two Captains are relatives of Stephen Hopkins—excellent gentlemen, but no seamen. We think Mr. Nicholas Biddle of Philadelphia would make a good Captain, and I'd like to list the name of one of my own skippers, born in Scotland but now a Virginian and a good patriot—"

"If he's a foreigner from down South," snapped John Adams, "there's no place for him! What's his name?"

"Jones," said Hewes. "John P. Jones. I want him commissioned a Captain."

With only eighteen positions to be filled, and thirteen men on the committee, the battle for the four captaincies was a warm one. It ended in Morris getting his man in, but Hewes had to be content with a senior lieutenantcy for Jones, and dour John Adams growled to the bitter end about "foreigners from down South." A glass of hot rum punch all around finished the evening amicably, but to a shrewd shipping-master like Hewes, it was quite obvious that the new Navy was cruising into some very stormy weather indeed. . . .

Mr. John Jones headed into some stormy December weather himself at the Dandridge plantation; being as yet ignorant of the Philadelphia pro-

"While we lay at Tobago, I was attacked by a drunken seaman."

ceedings, he was closeted with Nathaniel Dandridge in the gloomy book-lined library. He had arrived in time to lunch with the family, had then asked his host for a private interview, and lost no time in coming straight to the point. Somewhat to his surprise, he found Dandridge by no means an implacable judge; and the planter, to his own surprise, found that the young man was not one to mince words.

"I don't know whether to be amazed at your effrontery or to admire your courage," said Dandridge, his stern eye thoughtful. "You admit that your name is an alias, that your short life has been clouded by piracy, slave-running and murder—yet you expect me to admit your pretensions to my daughter's hand! How do you excuse yourself, Mr. Jones?"

"I never do that; he who excuses himself, accuses himself," Jones replied with a quiet confidence that was impressive. "I have admitted certain facts to you. Will you permit me to explain them, without excuse?"

"I am entirely at your service," said Dandridge, watching the mobile features.

"Thank you. I was master of a ship plying between Scotland and Tobago, in the West Indies. While we lay at Tobago, I was attacked by a drunken seaman, and in self-defense killed him, without the intention of doing so. Evil tongues magnified this into a crime and gained me a bad name there. Later on, again at Tobago by ill fortune, a mutiny took place aboard, and in repressing it I again killed one of the mutineers."

"AND your name then?" inquired the older man.

"My name was and is John Paul," said Jones. "As a boy, I had served a brief term in the British Navy and had deserted. This was known at Tobago. Without friends or money, I dared not face a prejudiced Admiralty Court, which had resolved to make an example of me. Therefore, I took to flight—my one mistake, and most bitterly have I paid for it."

Dandridge nodded judicially. "Yet a natural error. I served in the British Navy, as you know, and I can well comprehend your position. Any Admiralty Court is like to be very hard on a shipmaster who kills one of his crew, for whatever reason."

"Well," pursued Jones, "I gained refuge aboard a Spanish ship. She proved to be a pirate. As soon as possible I left her and became mate of a slave-ship running to the African coast. There I was stricken with fever. I came to this country, assumed the name of Jones as my brother had done, and set about rehabilitating myself."

He spoke without passion, without any emotion, as though discussing a third person.

"Does one do this by living under a cloud?" asked Dandridge.

"Why not? The ambition of my life was to lay up enough money to have the case reopened at Tobago, facing the old charges and clearing the name of John Paul. For this I need lawyers; they are expensive. I have the proper testimony to present; it is at your service. Thanks to nearly two years of residence here, I am now almost in position to set about clearing the record. Dr. Read knows all of these details."

"So I understand." Dandridge nodded. "I like your frankness; I shall be equally frank. You have eloquent

"I believe you, John dear, and I want to know no more."

friends—Washington, Lee, Dr. Franklin, Jefferson—but you are under a cloud, and while that cloud remains you cannot pay your addresses to my daughter. Do you find my position unjust?"

The face of Jones lighted. "No! It is eminently just, sir. I was afraid you'd be an open enemy when I had told you everything."

The stern eyes warmed, a smile twitched at the stern lips.

"An enemy? Nonsense. You're not returning to the sea?"

"I've left it forever," Jones said quickly. "I'm arranging to buy a plantation—as soon as the past has been cleared up—on which I shall settle down for life."

Dandridge came to his feet and began to pace up and down the room.

"Jones, I like you more than ever," he said. "You thought me an enemy—how little one knows the secrets of other hearts! Now attend; my old friend Patrick Henry is the best lawyer in Virginia. If you permit, I shall ask him to take charge of your case, and shall guarantee all costs. Despite the war, he can arrange all formalities with Tobago lawyers, and get this matter cleared up. Do you agree?"

Jones sprang to his feet, astonished and overjoyed.

"Sir! With all my heart! You overwhelm me—"

"No thanks," broke in the other. "If I did resent these matters, your frankness has banished such feeling. Dorothea loves you; I have in mind only her happiness. As to the plantation you mentioned, let me have the details. I know you. I know your ability, I have confidence in your future; we shall work it out together."

Jones wrung his hand, but Dandridge again stopped his quick gratitude.

"One moment! I must exact a pledge from you. Until your name is cleared, until you become John Paul once more, you must not see Dorothea again."

"You have my word of honor, sir," Jones exclaimed quickly. "You've made me the happiest man alive this day! I shall assuredly meet you halfway in all you request—"

He broke off, glancing at the window; together they went to it, peering out at a horseman, well wrapped against the cold, who drove his lagging and foam-lathered mount up the drive.

"Egad! It's Read!" exclaimed Dandridge. "What has brought him here in such mad haste? Look at his horse! I'll go bring Read in—"

TOGETHER they fetched him into the house, unwrapped him, and set him before the library fire with a hot toddy. He was gasping and breathless, but Jones could not wait to broach his great news; he poured it all forth in high excitement, giving his impetuous spirit free rein; even Dandridge broke into a laugh at his eager manner. Dr. Read listened and sipped his toddy, and smiled with Dandridge.

"Ah, yes, I half anticipated as much," said he. "A cold eye and a warm heart—yes, Nathaniel, I know you of old. Ah, but I've got great news myself—it's a cursed cold day for an old man to ride so far—came to find you, John!"

"Yes, by all means—sorry I burst out with my own," said Jones penitently. "Let's have it, Doctor. You came to find me, you say?"

"Aye." Read clapped his pockets vainly. "A long letter from Hewes at Philadelphia—must have left it lying with my spectacles! Well, no matter—I know it all. Hewes says there's the devil to pay, gentlemen! This new Navy of ours has been crammed with the friends and relatives of politicians—only one man in the lot, Biddle of Philadelphia, is a proper seaman and knows his business. The rest of 'em are inefficient greenhorns. The Navy is doomed before it's born, says Hewes. We can't hope to face British ships with that sort of men in command of ours."

Dandridge shook his head thoughtfully. "Sad news indeed, Read. He is right about it, too. I know the British Navy. But that didn't bring you here in such haste?"

"I'm coming to it; give me time," said Read, with a gulp at his drink. "Ah! That does warm a man inside! Sad, you say? Rather, it's shameful! Hopkins-Adams relatives crammed in to fill the Navy with Yankee officers, says he—"

"Yankees are splendid seamen," broke in Jones.

"Of course, of course! But ships need to be commanded by seamen, not by political appointees!" cried Dr. Read. "Why, with those seamen of ours, one good man could take hold and build up a record of glory to outlast the ages! Hewes is right about it. We have the best seamen in the world. One man with the courage and daring to attack the boasted British Navy, would make the name of American seamen immortal!"

"Possibly," agreed Dandridge.

Jones flamed up.

"Of course! Hewes is dead right! What a chance for a man who could take hold and do it bravely—give 'em gun for gun, no shillyshally—attack, attack, attack! But where's the man to do it?"

"Hewes has the man," said Read.

"Good! Splendid! Who is he, then—Biddle?"

"No, John. *You* are the man."

Jones stepped back, thunderstruck, doubting his own ears.

"Me? I? No, no! You understood his words amiss—"

Read set down his glass. "Now listen to me. Hewes has obtained you a commission as senior lieutenant. The flagship of the fleet, the *Alfred*, lies at the foot of Walnut Street in Philadelphia. You're to get there at once, post-haste, and take command of her arming and outfitting. Her commander is a relative of John Adams—a good man enough, but a figurehead at the work. You'll be in actual command and will be made captain at the first vacancy. That's my big news."

SILENCE lay upon the room for a moment.

"Oh, by gad!" murmured Jones. "What a chance it would be—what a chance! But no. It's impossible, Doctor. You don't understand—"

"No talk, John," Read broke in. "Take my horse, get a fresh one in Fredericksburg. You must get off immediately, this very moment! The need is imperative. Hewes declares you are the one man on whom he can rely implicitly. The Navy relies on you, the country itself must rely upon you!"

Jones stood silent. His radiant delight died away; the thing was impossible. He dropped into a chair, staring blankly. Dandridge glanced at him, comprehended, and took up the matter.

"Read, let me get in a word here. You don't understand the situation. Jones can't take on this task; he doesn't want to return to the sea. Besides, his first duty is to clear himself. I've agreed to help him financially, and we'll get Patrick Henry to take up the legal end of it and clear his name. It's his duty to do this first of all—his duty to me, to Dorothea and to himself—"

"No, no! My greatest duty lies elsewhere, Dandridge!" broke out Jones impulsively. His hands gripped together, fingers twisting and untwisting. "Look! This is something I can do—by God, I can do it superbly! I don't want to do it, but there it is!"

Dandridge turned sharply upon him.

"Careful, young man, careful! Are you so flitterbrained as to forget everything that you've just said, at the first glittering temptation?"

"Don't!" The face of Jones was stricken and gray. "Dandridge, you must understand! It's not that. It's no temptation—it's only what I can do, must do."

He broke off, facing an agony of decision and dreading it.

"Don't be impetuous and foolish," Dandridge warned him, in obvious resentment. "You swore never to go back to sea. Your ambitions, your hopes, your whole future, lie here. When you have once more become John Paul and the suitor of my daughter—that's time enough to think about wild-goose chasing. Our country has plenty of seamen!"

Jones raised his head; there were tears in his eyes.

"Our country has not a man who can do what I might accomplish. Private affairs must wait. This is my chance—here is my country's urgent need; she has called me; it is my chance to serve her as no other man could!" He paused, then the words came rushing out of his very heart.

"I can see all that Hewes means; the whole situation is clear to me! Inefficiency is the curse of any ship, any Navy! And I can do this thing—why, Dandridge, I love this adopted country of mine, I've loved her for years, she is the great shining ideal of my heart! Since I was a boy I've loved her with my whole soul! And shall I fail her now in an hour of bitter need? I can see everything clearly—what one bold man would mean to her, one man who would give the example of audacity, of attack, of seamanship and skill!"

Read started to speak, but Dandridge drowned him out, not angrily but with stern finality.

"No man can serve two masters. I've offered you fair dealing; would you turn your back on it? No wandering fellow under a cloud, no nameless John Jones, can darken my door. I've my duty to my family to consider. This is only just. If you decide to refuse all that I offer, the choice is yours."

"Oh, it's just, yes," murmured Jones. "Bitter hard, but just all the same. Yes, you are right, Dandridge."

"Then don't be tempted by this folly. Reconsider, man!"

JONES looked at him, white-faced, but smiling a little. Then he said slowly, his voice hoarse:

"Reconsider what? I've nothing to reconsider. I love Dorothea; I've dreamed day and night of clearing my name, of building the future securely. You offer me everything a man can hope for in this life—"

"Good!" exclaimed Dandridge in relief. "You can't afford to turn your back on it. Why, this very commission from the Congress is in the name of Jones—an alias!"

The younger man smiled no longer. His face was white; between the high cheekbones his dark gray eyes were alive and blazing.

"God knows you speak the truth, Dandridge. I admit it. But my mind's made up, and lesser things must wait. The desires of a man's heart are not the greatest things in life. Jones I am, Jones I shall be. John Paul Jones—why, it's not a bad name! Better to make it remembered with honor than to live safely and shamefully as John Paul, who failed his country in her bitter need!"

Dr. Read rose from his chair and beckoned to him.

"Your pardon, Dandridge. Jones, come over here to the window for a private word."

Dandridge stared down into the fire, the anger gradually dying from his eyes. At the window, Dr. Read buttonholed Jones and spoke softly, urgently, gravely. And his words struck the younger man with astonishment, for now it was Read who counseled prudence.

"I didn't dream affairs would go to such extremes, John. I don't want you to ruin your whole life and future, so think twice. I must warn you that you're not the only suitor in the field; there's another whom Dandridge favors."

Jones stared out at the wintry scene, and his heart sank as he remembered the words of Dorothea: "I'm not strong and brave— I'm weak and afraid, especially of Father. . . . I could be brave if I had you to make me brave, but without you . . . anything might happen. I need you, John—I need you so badly!"

He knew now what must lie behind those words of hers—family discussions, urgings, heartburning efforts to turn her from him. Yes, she needed him. Here was his place, if he were to win his shining vision of the future and all that lay closest to his heart. The cold December wind struck down across the empty tobacco-fields, and he could almost feel its chilling breath piercing into him.

"Thanks, old friend," he said quietly. "But I've already decided."

He turned, to find Dandridge stepping quickly toward him.

"A moment, Jones," said the planter. "Let's not be hasty—upon my word, I'm ashamed of the position I took a moment ago! It was ungenerous, and I repent it. I see you're determined on your course."

"I am," said Jones.

The other extended his hand.

"Give me your fist, man; I can't see you go in anger. I honor you, Jones, and wish you Godspeed! Let all personal affairs await your return. My offer holds good: As soon as you're in position to do so, come back to us and I'll supply the backing you need."

"Why, sir, God bless you!" Jones smiled again, warming to the honest words. "I'd like a word with Mistress Dandridge and with Dorothea, before leaving."

"They've driven to Mount Vernon to visit Mrs. Washington. They'll be back tomorrow," said Dandridge heartily. "Stay over until then, by all means—"

Jones turned. "Impossible. I'll write to Dorothea, if I may. Read, I'll take your horse and leave him in Fredericksburg; you take mine, which is in worse shape than yours. Good-by, gentlemen; I'm off. And I promise you that when I return the name of John Paul Jones shall be an honored one!"

He scooped up hat and greatcoat, and was gone with that swift, springy step like the tread of a panther. The door slammed behind him.

He kept his promise, but he did not return, for he was at L'Orient in France, outfitting the *Bonhomme Richard* for the glory road, when he had word that Dorothea had become the wife of Patrick Henry of Virginia.

WHAT was it he wrote of heroism? He did not call it that, nor do our boys who drop everything they hold dear and go to far seas and bitter beachheads, as did he. But he put into words what they hold unsaid in their hearts, when he wrote that in his country's service—"I have sacrificed not only my favorite scheme of life, but the softer affections of my heart and my prospects of domestic happiness." That is the higher courage, the truest heroism; and for this, no less than for battles won, we uncover to the name of John Paul Jones.

Smack Her

Even a power-of-attorney from a brother officer is a weak weapon against a determined girl on the warpath.

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

THE driver said: "Seventy-five cents plus tip. I can't wait for you."

Second Lieutenant Paul Ward knew a command when he heard one. He tipped. The driver accepted the dollar without comment. He lit a cigarette and drove rapidly away.

Paul looked after him, frowning slightly. In a small Maryland town it wasn't quite the sort of conversation a man expected, even from a taxi-driver. Strictly to the point. And the point was money.

"Accent on *money!*" he muttered, stowing away his thinning wallet. "Like the girl in this house. Money-mad!"

He paused to look at the house. A chill little wind was blowing.

Even three thousand miles away, the job hadn't sounded too good. But Hap Ryder was a right guy, and Hap had been mighty upset. Also, as Paul Ward realized now, a bombardier with fifty missions behind him, about to push off on home leave, would say yes to anything a crew mate asked him.

Hap had been explicit: "Don't let it bother you that she's my sister. Smack her down! Or rather, give the little penny-pincher one chance, then let the lawyer smack her down. It won't take you ten minutes."

Hap Ryder's home was a sizable brick house of quiet distinction. The grounds around it sloped down to the river. Through the leafless lilacs and other shrubbery Paul could see a long narrow wooden pier that meandered out past the shallows. At the outer end a cabin cruiser was moored. Paul grinned in recognition.

That boat would be the original *Merrily*. Hap had stubbornly claimed his right as pilot to name his plane as he chose. So, most incongruously but thoroughly, the Fortress *Merrily* had blasted many Nazi fields and factories.

It would be pleasant to go aboard a *Merrily* without lugging a bombsight and a hollow stomach along with you.

Paul brought his eyes back to the house. He approved of its handsome white doorway flanked by two small white columns. It had been built long before the gingerbread and scroll-saw era. The captain's widow's walk, with strong white balustrade topping the roof, was simple and inviting. You could look down the river and out across the Sound from up there; Hap Ryder had told him that often enough to make it stick.

He shook his head as he started up the brick walk. Imagine degrading a stately old house like that! Money-mad! Hap Ryder had diagnosed his sister's case from across an ocean and he had hit it right on the nose. Money-mad, a bunch of these home folks.

Paul smiled grimly and gave the pocket of his field jacket a tap. It crackled reassuringly. He had the means and the will to be tough. Besides, it would be only ten minutes. But, as he neared the handsome doorway he was aware that that cussed stomach of his was going a bit hollow on him, as if it were a target he was approaching instead of merely a girl in a charming if slightly war-hardened Maryland town.

KATHLEEN RYDER herself opened the door. One look and there was no doubt about it to a man who knew Hap. Same light brown hair, with a touch of red in it, same finely formed features, nose tilted even a bit more than Hap's. And her eyes—yes, they were Hap's blue, certainly.

So she'd be good-looking on him, would she?

"I'm Paul Ward," he said hastily, and his voice sounded a little too loud in his own ears. "For a while I flew as bombardier in your brother's Fortress over in England. He asked me to come and see you—on a matter of business."

"On a matter of business," the girl repeated slowly. She looked up at him rather carefully as she opened

Down

Kathleen lunged against him. Paul gripped her arms. "If I go, you go," he said.

the door wider. "Oh, yes, please come in, Lieutenant Ward. Hap wrote that you were coming."

Paul had read that letter. He had even suggested toning down the indignation a bit. But try to tell Hap Ryder anything! Anyhow, it explained this matter-of-fact greeting. Some girls would have flung their arms around a man who had flown through plenty of flak and fighters with their brother. But not this five-foot-four iceberg. She was just barely letting him come in; that was all.

The very hall he stepped into bore a sorry indication of her debasement of this gracious old house. There was an iron cot in it, askew at the foot of the stairs. In silence he followed her into what was plainly the library—or had been. Now there was a daybed barring access to the bookcases at one end. A closet, slightly open, had dresses in it. A sandwich and a cup and saucer stood on a card table. He frowned. Perhaps he should make allowances for civilian slackness, but it was after three o'clock in the afternoon.

"Please sit down," she said, indicating a leather armchair. When he was committed to the depths of the chair she sat primly upright on an uncomfortable looking side-chair. He shifted around uneasily. Was this just chance or had she already maneuvered him into the position of a big lounging beast about to bawl out a slim, inoffensive and unprotected young girl? Well, she wouldn't get away with softening him up like that. A stiff shot of official language was what she needed.

"Your brother is very seriously worried about what some Bristolport friends have written him about his old home," he plunged in abruptly.

SHE inclined her head. "Go on," she murmured.

"He doesn't in the least like the idea of your converting this fine old place into a rooming-house and jamming it full of shipyard workers. He hasn't got to first ba—that is, he hasn't been able to impress upon you sufficiently by letter his opposition."

"He has tried," she said.

"Fruitlessly," Paul Ward said sternly. A good word! "Home means something to a man flying missions over Germany. More, perhaps, than you can understand."

"I'm not good at understanding things," Kathleen said.

He looked at her suspiciously. Once or twice he had heard Hap Ryder make disarming statements meekly and the situation thereafter had taken a vigorous and unexpected turn.

"Your brother had hoped that your share of the estate, plus the generous allowance that he is making for the upkeed of the house, would be sufficient," he stated bluntly.

She waited for him to go on, with down-turned eyes surveying the slender fingers folded in her lap.

"Perhaps if it is not sufficient I might be able to induce him to increase it," Paul said. "He has the reputation among us of being most open-handed."

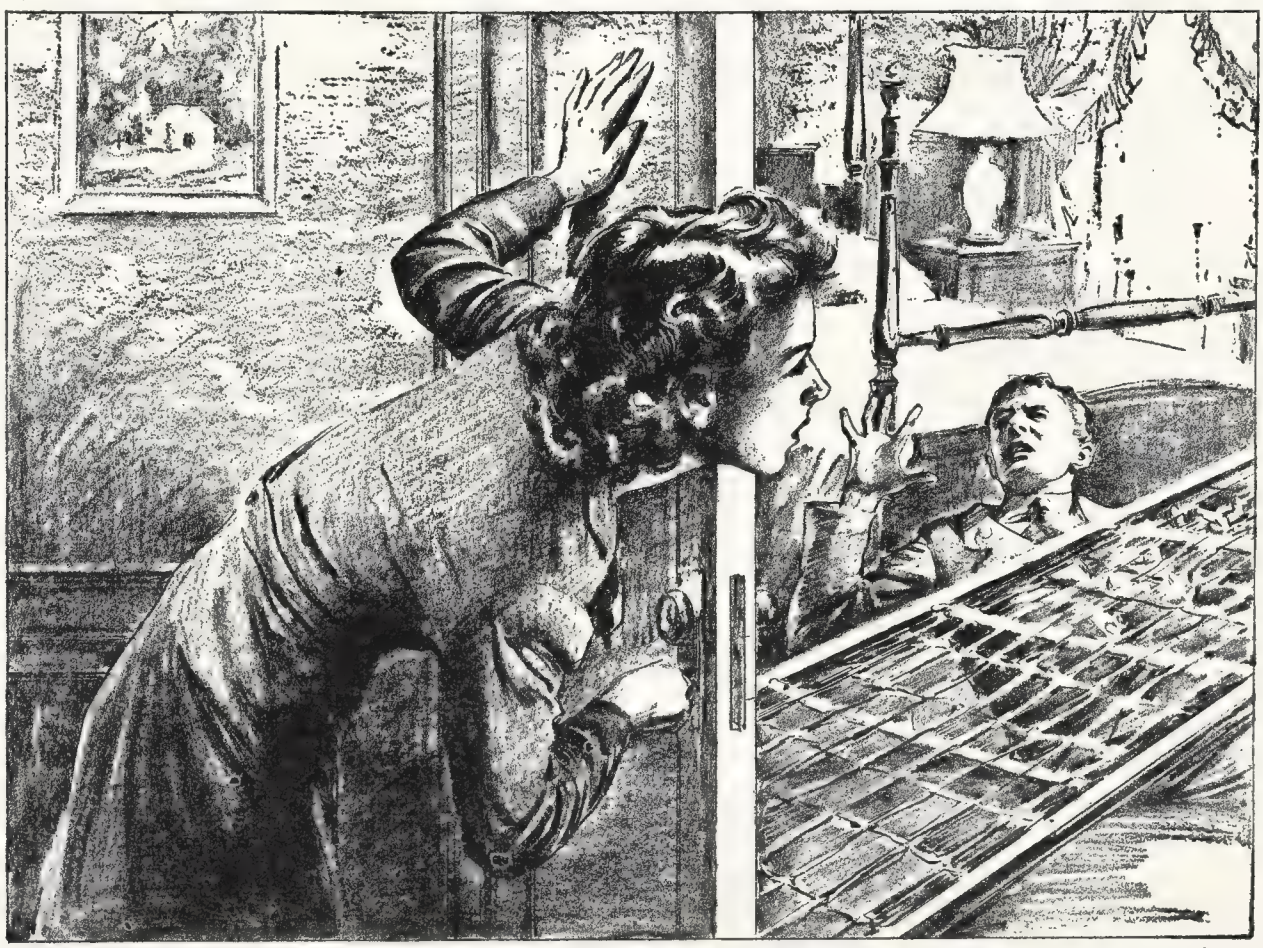
That was certainly telling her. She was getting two or three times what it would cost to keep this place in perfect condition. And she had to make it a rooming-house!

Apparently she couldn't think of anything to say in her own defense.

"The point I wish to make now is that the use of the house for roomers must stop immediately," he said.

Again he felt his hand touching the pocket of his field jacket that held that power-of-attorney. The thing took a whole single-spaced page of legal verbiage to say that Hap Ryder had made him boss of this house.

The girl's eyes, though they had been on her fingers, had followed his hand to the pocket. Now she looked up at him, with a smile. And more than a smile. There was a distinct glint in her blue eyes, something



Propelled backward, he staggered over onto the floor. The girl whisked through the door.

like a sunbeam reflecting briefly from a blue iceberg way off on the horizon. Ice-blink, seamen called it.

Paul tautened up warily. That was a familiar glint. Paul knew it too well. When that gleam showed briefly behind Hap Ryder's be-goggled eyes it never foretold any good for the Nazis. The most heart-stopping moments in Paul's career as a bombardier had followed upon that glint.

He got tough fast:

"I may say that today I consulted Mr. Hartlepool, who has most faithfully advised three generations of Ryders, and he is even more incensed than your brother over the use to which you have put the house. He says that in town they now call it Wood Butchers' Hall. It must stop at once, Miss Ryder."

"It seems odd, you know," she said mildly, "a stranger coming here and telling me what I must do."

He'd have a word for Hap Ryder's ear—getting him into this!

"Better me than a court," he said abruptly. Her eyes were downturned again; he couldn't see into them. "I assure you, Miss Ryder, that I have the means summarily to end your misuse of the place. Mr. Hartlepool will back that statement."

"The means?"

"I hold a power-of-attorney from your brother."

"Oh," she said. "I—I didn't know that. May I see it, please?"

HER hand moved limply toward him. But she made a mistake. She raised her eyes.

The glint was there, plain as the warning gleam of a lighthouse on a mess of rocks. Danger!

But that hand—so slim, so casual, so expectant, as it waited, palm upward, under his eyes. No gentleman could refuse such a hand, whatever it wished.

He took her hand and shook it, gently.

"I know your brother," he said, somewhat digressively. "I sincerely trust I won't have to make any use of my power of attorney. Uh—let's forget it."

"Let's," she said. She withdrew her hand, stood up and smiled at him. "Of course I shall have to see Pop Hartlepool and ask him about promises I have made to roomers and so on, and it may take some time."

He struggled out of the low armchair, smiling.

"Your promises will be considered invalid," he assured her. Somewhat slowly he followed her out into the hall. Probably she was busy—or perhaps a bit miffed at him. Her breeding would make her conceal any irritation, of course. And he was enormously relieved—or was he?

Illustrated by Frederic Anderson

She had not at once led him to the handsome front door. She had paused, with a little frown, to regard the iron cot that desecrated this noble hall.

"That!" she said. "It was all I could get for a roomer coming in tonight. The delivery-boys just dumped it there and ran while I was out in the back."

"Can't we stow it somewhere?" he suggested willingly.

"Would you help me? Without prejudice?"

"Without prejudice," he said heartily.

She paused. "I'm afraid it goes upstairs," she said hesitantly. "And there's an awkward turn. Just dump your coat anywhere. I'll take the front end—you'll be carrying the weight."

Firm yet friendly. That was the way to handle a headstrong girl like that. He tossed his coat on a chair and approached the near end of the cot. She was already standing by the other end at the head of the stairs.

For her size and slim build, Kathleen was quite strong. She lifted her end easily and, step by step, moved up the flight of stairs backward while he followed.

On the upper landing they paused. She nodded toward a door behind him.

"If you could open that—and then back in," she said.

He obeyed and, craning his neck around, shuffled backward into the room. There seemed to be a bed in here already. He glanced interrogatively at her. His fingers tightened spasmodically on the iron cot. Again, unmistakably, that blue glint was alight in her eyes. What—

She pushed mightily her end of the bed. Propelled backward, he staggered and hooked his legs against a chair. He crashed over onto the floor with the cot half over him.

The girl whipped the key out of the lock on the door, whisked through and slammed the door on him. The key clicked in the lock. Her light footsteps went racing down the stairs.

He leaped to his feet. Of course! The power-of-attorney—in his field jacket—on that chair in the hall!

He raced toward the door, spun around and headed for the window. He jerked it open and looked down. No handy roof below—just a drop to the bushes.

CLIMBING over the sill, he lowered himself full length and let go. Bushes crackled busily but didn't break his fall much. He sprawled and recovered. On his stinging feet he shifted warily, like a quarterback looking for a pass receiver. She'd lock that front door against him, the little devil! He plunged around to the back.

He had guessed right. She came pelting out the back. Past a string of diminishing outbuildings she rushed toward a pile of burning leaves. She had his jacket in her hands, and was trying to find the pocket in full flight.

She saw him. She swerved like a good broken-field runner, and streaked toward the long dock. She'd throw jacket and all overboard if she couldn't burn it. He really poured it on as he converged on her.

She went flying down the narrow, swaying pier. Heedless of the groaning timbers he legged it furiously after her. Maybe she wanted to tear up that power before she threw it over; the water alongside didn't look deep.

Right at the end she leaped for the cockpit of the *Merrily*. When she saw she couldn't make the cabin in time to

lock the door, she whirled and tried to fling the coat. He reached, hooked the flying garment on one stretching finger and dragged it back to him.

"Naughty!" he said, grinning and panting. She came at him. Hastily he dropped the jacket on the cockpit bench and sat on it to show her the game was all over.

"You—" she said fiercely. Her eyes were full of dancing fire. "So my promises will be considered invalid, will they? *My* promises! I'm to turn out these roomers on legal grounds—is that it? Well, you can tell Hap Ryder to go jump in the Thames—and have him keep the hole he makes wide open for you, too!"

It was time for him to be getting this power-of-attorney into old Hartlepool's safe. But, facing those flaming eyes, he decided to sit on it a while until she cooled off.

KATHLEEN must have read his face and realized that it was all over. Of a sudden she dropped to the seat beside him, drooping.

"I'm not a bit sorry," she said. "Except that I didn't manage to get it."

"What good would it have done?" he asked. "I could have got another from Hap within—well, call it a month."

"You don't know what I could do in a month," she said sadly. "A month—will you give me a month?"

He stirred, then sat more tightly on his power.

"No!" he said. "I told Hap I'd do this for him, and I will. Hap's—a friend of mine."

He tried to forget the girl, thinking over one or two spots the *Merrily* crew had hit on daylight runs. Besides, she ought to be taught, before she got too hard, that money isn't the only thing to fight for.

He looked sidewise at her and decided that she had cooled below the point of useless violence. He stood up and slipped on his coat.

"I don't suppose I could get you to see reason—without using this thing—could I, Kathleen?" he asked gruffly. He jumped over onto the dock without waiting for her answer.

She followed swiftly.

"I don't suppose so," she said. "But—I'll listen to you!"

He was pleased that she did not attempt to walk along beside him on the side nearest that important pocket. Apparently pickpocketing wasn't to be attempted.

They started down the long pier almost amicably.

"Go on, my bombastic bombardier," she said lightly. "Talk!"

"I know how important money is," he said, staring at the solid old back of the Ryder house. "I'm not saying— No, you don't!"

She had lunged against him with all the suddenly mobilized strength of her strong little body. But on the extreme edge of the planking, he rallied and kept his balance. He gripped her arms and smiled down at her.

"Ink doesn't run much when only momentarily submerged," he told her. "Besides, if I go, you go."

"Right!" she said. She kicked him sharply on the shin. He flinched.

He felt himself going. He jumped backward, dragging her with him. They splashed over the side into mud and water. When he floundered to his feet, he was submerged only up to his chest.

"You—d—confounded—little Ranger, you!" he spluttered. Cold water! "I told you the ink—"

She drew a quick breath, and poked and kicked at his pocket, intent on pounding his paper to a pulp. He pushed her away with grim resolution and waded over to a ladder. For a moment she pretended to be drowning; then, seeing that it wouldn't work, she swam indignantly after him. He got up on the pier first, extended a hand. It was ignored.

"It's undoubtedly quite indecipherable," she said. "Let's see."

The wind drawing down the river was as chill as snowflakes.

"Stop playing me for a sap!" he said. "In private—and in shelter—I'll have a look. You deserve a better cause—or do you scrap about everything like this?"

"With people like you—about everything!" she flared. "If you want to dry your clothes, you may go to the kitchen!"

"Not me," he said. "You've probably got trapdoors and sliding panels all over the place."

"Freeze, then!" she said with chattering teeth. "And when you have—I'll get it!"

She ran down the pier toward the house.

Paul glanced down at himself. He was not looking as the Army likes second lieutenants to look in public. He reviewed the situation and then walked back to the *Merrily*, gently rubbing her fender bar against the worn piles of the dock.

He boarded and entered her cabin. Hap had promised to have him aboard this *Merrily* after the war, but he hadn't imagined it would be like this.

"Ten minutes, Hap said it would take!" he muttered.

He pulled the wet document from his jacket pocket and unfolded it gingerly. The typing was unhurt. Hap's signature was still legible. With great care he spread it out on a bunk. He opened a clothes locker and found, among oddments of seagoing attire, a pair of overalls stiff with paint and a sweat shirt. Gratefully he stripped and slid into these. He was still warm enough from his tussle and the shock of the cold water.

He brought his clothes out into the cockpit and began wringing them out. He flapped them around in the breeze. Good exercise. He kept looking toward the house but saw no sign of Kathleen. A couple of old cars came rattling into sight on the driveway. He frowned at them. With a look of habit they parked behind the chicken run. Some of Kathleen's roomers, no doubt, coming home from the day shift. He shook his head. Roomers!

He kept on flapping his clothes and watching. Kathleen appeared. And she was not alone. She came striding down the dock at the head of three sizable men in overalls, like a general leading an army with banners. They were men past draft age but hard as rocks, telegraphing trouble with every swing of their shoulders.

"Bad!" Paul Ward told himself. He dropped his clothes and clapped on his wet cap, symbol of his rank. "But worse for them—if they start anything!" He stood his ground in the cockpit.

Kathleen, in dry sweater and slacks, came on with her guerrilla army. Red-cheeked, she held her nose high, which was unnecessary, as it already had a decided tilt. And her eyes not only glinted but were triumphant. She thrust out an arm at Paul Ward.

"See," she said to her army, "he even stole Lieutenant Ryder's old cap, as well as his whole uniform off the line. And then he had the nerve to sneak out here to dry it off!"

PAUL'S glare shifted from the army to its general.

"Don't give it a thought, Miss Kat'leen," said the foremost man in overalls. He clapped a hard red eye on Paul Ward. "We'll fix it."

"It isn't the uniform, so much, Jake," Kathleen said plaintively. "But there was an important paper—it has my brother's own signature on it—in one of the pockets."

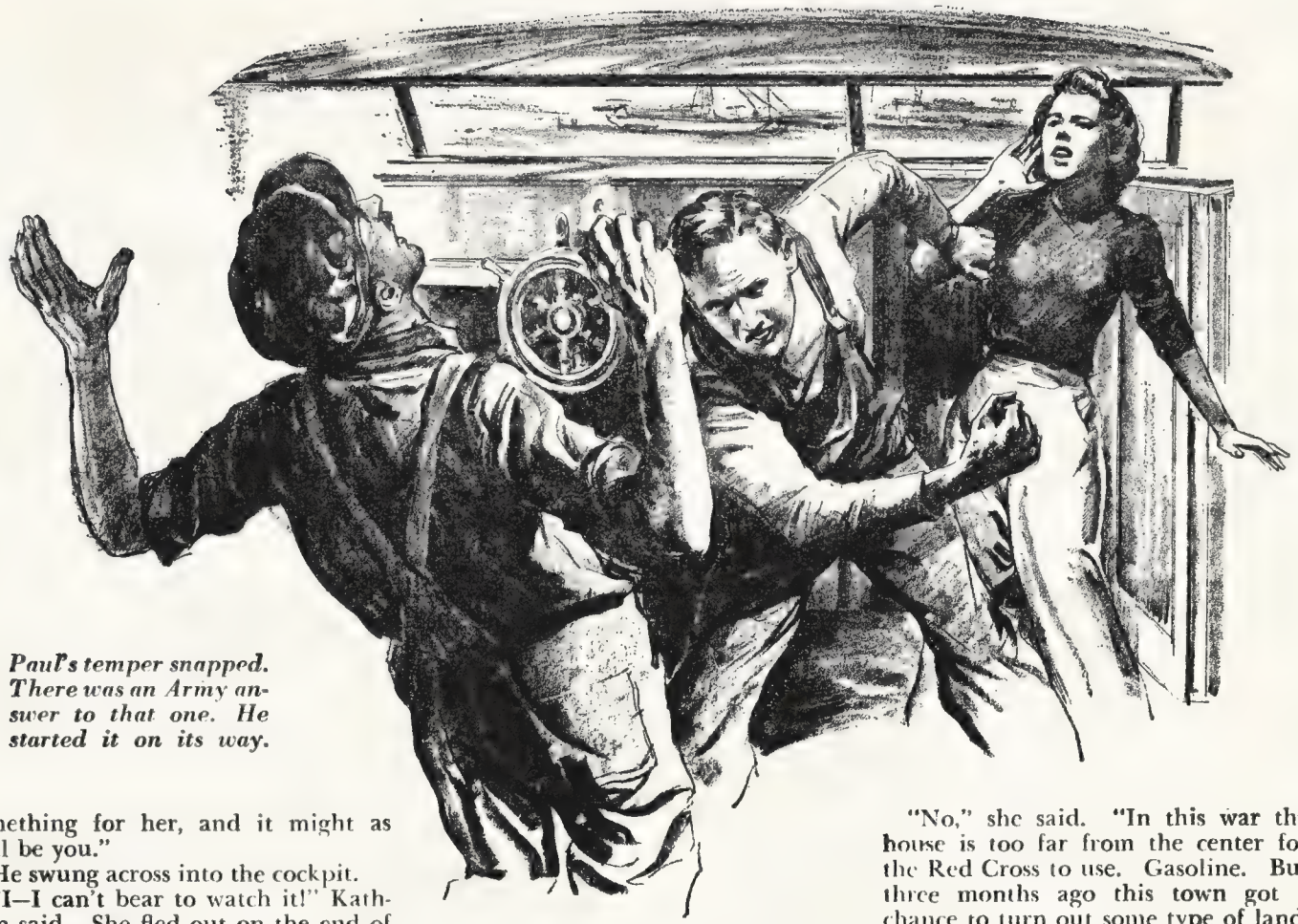
"These are my own clothes," Paul said curtly. "And I am an Army officer on active duty."

"You look it," Jake said and the army guffawed. "Probably Air Corps, huh? On active duty robbin' clotheslines!"

He pointed to himself with a thumb like the head of a machinist's hammer. "An' I'm a wood butcher, also on active duty, and so are these other guys."

"For your own good you mustn't believe what Miss Ryder—"

"You done your sneak-thiefing, fellow, from just the wrong person—the best little dame in this town, that gave twenty men swell quarters an' decent beds at prices they could meet," Jake said. "We been wanting to do



Paul's temper snapped. There was an Army answer to that one. He started it on its way.

something for her, and it might as well be you."

He swung across into the cockpit.

"I—I can't bear to watch it!" Kathleen said. She fled out on the end of the dock, where the cabin screened her from Paul's accusing glance.

Jake shoved his face, with glowering eyes, close to Paul's.

"First," Jake said, "you come across with this paper the lady wants."

Paul stood firm. He knew he couldn't beat three husky carpenters who felt they had on their side justice and a chance to do Kathleen Ryder a favor. But if he could talk them into letting him go into the cabin they'd have to be fast to stop him from diving overboard with that power-of-attorney. Kathleen wouldn't stand by and see him drown—or would she? He glanced toward the end of the dock but she wasn't in sight.

"Look," he said to Jake. "If I give you this paper—"

"If!" said Jake. He was offended. He stretched out a hand toward Paul's neck.

Paul's temper snapped. There was an Army answer to that one. He started it on its way.

"Stop it!" Kathleen cried.

Paul jumped uncontrollably. Her voice was behind him. Behind! He whirled. She was there. She had just come out of the cabin the door of which he was guarding so resolutely.

"Motorboats have forward hatches," she said sweetly. She brushed by him to lay a hand on Jake's arm.

"I'm sorry, Jake," she said. "These *are* his clothes. "I've misled you. It's all my mistake. He is an officer."

Jake stared, slowly absorbing this information.

"Well, O.K.," he said haltingly. "That'll be all, boys. We'll be getting back to Wood Butchers' Hall."

He shook his head at Paul Ward.

"Dames," he whispered. "No matter how good they are they're still—dames! Is that bad? How would a man only fifty-three know?"

HE strode across to the pier, and with his silent partners tramped toward shore.

Kathleen hiccuped.

Paul turned on her.

"I ate it," she said happily. "Best signature I ever tasted. Now what are you going to do?"

"Get another," he said curtly.

"No," she said. "You aren't. Look!"

She pointed to the Ryder house. The old bricks were glowing gently in the light of the descending sun.

"That house was headquarters for a general during the Revolution. In the war between the States it was a hospital for both sides. In 1918 it was the headquarters of the Red Cross in our town."

"All the more reason it shouldn't be used as a rooming-house!"

"No," she said. "In this war the house is too far from the center for the Red Cross to use. Gasoline. But three months ago this town got a chance to turn out some type of landing-craft in small shipyards where they work with wood. We went out and found men up and down the Bay—boat carpenters. People made room for them. Now, at the top of the jam a few townspeople have taken advantage of them, fixing up garages and even chicken-houses as living-quarters at high rents. Well?"

She pointed again at the mellow old house.

"This house has always done its bit, in every war," she said fiercely. "It will do its bit in this one. A hundred years from now 'Wood Butchers' Hall' will still be a picturesque and honorable name for our house. And the money it earns is fighting in this war. Every cent!"

Again the glint of blue ice was in her eyes.

"Do you and Hap, and your little Fortress too, think you can stop me?" she asked.

"Little Fortr—" He was aghast at this blasphemy. He took her by the shoulders and shook her till her teeth clicked.

"You beat me only because you were right!" he said. "Any time you're wrong I'll smack you down plenty! Understand?"

Meekly she hiccuped.

His expression softened.

"Meanwhile I know a sure cure for documentary hiccup," he said.

America's Heirloom Stories

We have not only a rich and vast inheritance of land and space and mines and forests, but also the peculiar treasure of lore and story that has been won for us through the pioneer years. This too is something worth fighting for—and adding to. . . . A few examples follow.

Sven, the Hundred Proof Irishman

OLD Gallagher polished his bald head.

"It's too bad," he says to himself. "Every son of the Old Sod I hire turns out to be a booze-histing floater. And what work they do aint much good. But I can't help liking the lads from the land of me dear old Mother."

Old Gallagher scratched and sighed.

"What I ought to do is hire me a Swede," he says. "They turn out good work and they're steady. But I don't like the daggone lunkheads! They just naturally rub me the wrong way. Still, it's a cinch I got to get somebody. I need another glassblower bad."

Next morning a floater came in the plant.

"What kin ye blow?" says old Gallagher.

"Anything you want, from pints to five gallons," says the floater.

"What's your name?" says the old man.

"Shaemas O'Toole," says the floater. "Burprrrp!"

"O.K.," says the old man, "get on out to the five-gallon tank before your breath makes me drunk."

Shaemas staggered on back in the plant. Next morning he drew his day's pay to pay board and never showed up again.

The old man roared.

"Out drunk again, the bottle-busting boozer! He never had got good and sober, even. Two five-gallon jugs he made. Two—for eleven bucks!"

In a few days in came number two floater. The old man looked at him.

"What kin ye blow?" says he.

"Anyshing from pintsh to five gallonsh," says number two.

"Good, aint you?" says the old man. "How about window glass?"

"Shure, all winnow glash you want," says number two.

"I bet," says the old man. "What's your name?"

"Patrick Michael Shulliwan," says number two.

"All right. Get on back and make one gallons if you can walk that far. Say, ye aint drunk, are ye?"

"Never toush drop shtuff," says Sullivan, reeling out.

He lasted a week and drew full pay. Fifty-five dollars.

"Never see him again," says the old man.

He didn't.

So a few days later Sven Murphy came in. Old Gallagher glared at him fierce.

"What kin ye blow best, boy?"

"Anything from pints to five gallons," says Sven. "Or window glass if you want it."

The old man let out a roar.

"Anything, huh? I bet! How much do ye weigh, boy?"

"Ninety-one pounds and six ounces," says Sven, "with my shoes on."

"Been drinking, aint you?" says the old man.

"Sure," says Sven, "I just had breakfast."

The old man hit the ceiling.

"Git out!" he howls. "Another dog hair! I just been stung by two in a row and not another one will I hire! No dog hair! No floater! No booze-hister! Git out!"

"I aint no dog hair at all," says Sven, never batting an eyebrow. "I aint no floater. My name is Sven Murphy and I just got to this country from Ireland. I aint no booze-hister. I just drink for my health. Just a few quarts a day to keep my nerves steady. On Saturday maybe a few gallons more so I can sort of feel it."

"From Ireland, huh?" says the old man, very nice now. "Sven Murphy, ye say? What kind of a name is that? Are ye Irish or not?"

"My father was Irish, my mother was Swedish," says Sven.

"Swede, huh?" Old Gallagher frowned. "But your father was Irish? Go on back and make pint bottles, boy. I'm afraid ye couldn't handle fifteen pounds of glass and you only weighing ninety. Fifteen ounces is nearer your size."

"Ninety-one pounds and six ounces with my shoes on," says Sven, starting back to the tanks. "But I'll make pint bottles if you say so. Thank you kindly."

The old man took an interest in Sven. That evening when Sven was leaving he stopped him.

"How did they go today, boy?" he says.

"Just so-so," says Sven. "Not so good. But I'll do better tomorrow."

"How many pints did ye make todays?"

"Three hundred dozen," says Sven. "But I'll do better tomorrow."

The old man swallowed three times. Then he went back to the tanks. The foreman was there.

"Flaherty," says the old man, "how many pints did the new man make today?"

"Three hundred dozen," says Flaherty. "And he knocked off twice to go out for a drink. The glass-blowingest fool I ever seen."

"Praise the saints!" says old Gallagher. "Maybe he's the man I've been needing. An Irishman that works like a Swede! Put him on quarts tomorrow."

Next evening he stopped Sven again.

"Well, how many quarts did ye make, me boy?"

"Not many," says Sven. "Two hundred and sixty dozen. But I'll do better tomorrow."

"Put him on gallon jugs tomorrow," old Gallagher says to the foreman. "He's a glass-blowing fool, all right. Now if he just sticks with me."

Next day Sven made a hundred dozen gallons. "But I'll do better tomorrow," he says.

"Make five-gallon jugs tomorrow," says the old man.

NEXT day he went out to watch Sven work.

Sven stood by the five-gallon tank. The gathering boy gathered fifteen pounds of glass on the end of a pipe and gave it to Sven.

Sven took the pipe and blew. He swung it right. He swung it left. He clamped it into the mould and blew.

Sven broke the pipe loose and gave it back to the gathering boy.

The finisher put a rim on the jug.

The gathering boy handed Sven his pipe. Sven swung it right. He swung

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it left. He clamped it into the mould and blew.... Another five-gallon jug.

Old Gallagher's mouth hung open.

"Boy, ye're a glass-blowing fool!" he says. "How do ye do it so easy?"

"My wind is good and my nerves are steady," says Sven. He grabbed the pipe and swung it right. "But I'm not going so good today." He swung it left. "I'll do better tomorrow." He clamped it into the mould and blew.

The old man roared. "Ye're a glass-blowing fool!" he says. "Make window glass tomorrow. I want to see that."

Next day the whole crew stood around to see Sven Murphy blow window glass.

The gathering boy handed Sven his pipe. Ninety pounds of glass on the end. Sven swung it as easy as a mother swings her baby. Ninety pounds of glass on one end and ninety pounds of man on the other. He swung it right and left in the trench. He drew such a breath you could feel the draft and blew like Hell's own bellows.

Then he swung it up and they caught it and broke it off the pipe. A six-foot cylinder of glass, two feet through and shining like silver. They carted it off to split it and melt it down flat in the oven.

Sven grabbed his pipe and swung it.

"Praise the saints!" says old Gallagher. "Boy, ye're a glass-blowing fool! No Irish, no Swede nor no human could blow glass like you can. Ye must be a son of the devil!"

"I'll do better next week," says Sven, breaking the pipe loose again.

That was the end of the week.

Monday morning old Gallagher went to the plant feeling fine. All his troubles were over. He was humming: "Sure, I love the dear silver that shines de da dum; and de dum da, de dum—"

He opened the door to his office.

Sounded like the roof fell in. Old Gallagher swallowed his upper plate.

Sounded like a riot back in the plant. Glass breaking and people yelling at the tops of their voices.

Old Gallagher was fat but he moved fast. He took the other end of the plant in no time.

He busted in the door to the tank and storage room. The place was a wreck. The floor was covered with broken jugs, bottles and window glass. Men were lying around in the mess, some bleeding from cuts, some with big lumps on their heads. Gallagher was just in time to see Sven Murphy smash a five-gallon jug to the floor and Flaherty bend a blower's pipe over young Murphy's head. Murphy went down in a heap.

"Flaherty! Flaherty!" says the old man, running up. "Name of the saints! What's the matter?"

Flaherty was panting and blowing.

"This crazy fool," he says. "When we got here this morning he was here busting all the glassware he had made. Every last piece he had made last week. He just then busted the last jug. We tried to stop him but he couldn't be stopped. He laid out every man in the plant but me and went right on with his busting."

Sven Murphy stirred a little.

Old Gallagher bent over and shook him.

"Murphy!" he says. "Murphy! It's old Tom Gallagher, boy. Name of the saints, what's the matter? Have ye gone plumb looney, boy?"

Sven opened his mouth a little.

"Alla men," he mumbles, "alla lil green men."

"What men, boy?" says old Gallagher, propping him up in his arms. "What men are ye speaking of?"

"Alla lil green men," says Sven, "inna bottlesh I made lash week. Got to worrying 'bout 'em Shaturday night. Been in here all lash night bushting bottlesh to let 'em out."

A Sheep Herder from Yale

Reed & Cashion and other sheepmen come down here into Happy Valley every spring to lamb and shear—the sheep, I mean, not Reed & Cashion or the sheepmen; also to eat up all of Mrs. Peck's cow feed and help out some of the poor people around Wenden, the side track five miles up the line from Salome, the Mining Metropolis.

Algernon McGoogle—"Hotfoot Mac" they called him at Yale, on account of his sprinting ability—also came out here this spring, on account of his health, having exercised too much in his BVD's while training to beat the one hundred-yard record, and taken a bad cold, which settled on his lungs, so the doctors ordered Arizona and outdoor life for Mac. Mac had lived all his life in the city and Happy Valley, Arizona, was a new experience to him.

Mac landed in Happy Valley soon after the sheep—and he has been after them most of the time since, he says. Reed was short of herders and Mac was short of cash, and Scotch by descent, so Mac was soon hired to herd a band of about two thousand ba ba's. It is customary to herd the sheep

Illustrations by Charles B. Falls

around the desert among the greasewood and sage-brush during the day, bringing them back to the corrals at night on account of the coyotes.

Mac was started out the first morning with his band and instructed to wander along slowly toward a little butte several miles away, letting the sheep feed as they went along, and to start back toward camp so as to get in before dark. "Try and get them back here by five o'clock," Reed called to him as he left, "and don't let any of the lambs get away from the band," he added jokingly, as there were no lambs in the band and the ewes were not due to lamb for several weeks yet.

The sheep and Mac soon disappeared in the brush and nothing more was thought of them until supper time came and no sign of Mac or the sheep. Reed commenced to worry, about the sheep, and about seven o'clock was about to start out looking for them when Mac at last came driving them up through the brush into the corral and, after shutting them in, came up to the chuck tent, streaked with dust and perspiration and, from all appearances, tired out. Before Reed could say anything, Mac burst out:

"Boss," he said, "I'm through. They thought back east that I was a foot racer, but I'm not. Almost any sheep herder that can herd that band for a week and not lose those lambs can beat all the world's records. I didn't lose any today and I ran every one of those damn lambs back into the band every time they tried to get away, but one day is enough for me. I'm all in, but they are all there. Go and count them up and then give me my time. I'm done."

Reed, knowing that there were no lambs in the band and that none of the ewes could have lambed yet, went down to the corral to investigate and, off, in one corner, huddled up by themselves, he counted forty seven jackrabbits and sixteen cottontails.

Casey Jones

ON the last day of April . . . . occurs the anniversary of the death of Casey Jones—probably the most famous of a long line of locomotive engineer heroes who have died at their post of duty, with one hand on the whistle and the other on the airbrake lever. Casey Jones' fame rests on a series of nondescript verses, which can hardly be called poetry. They were written by Wallace Saunders, a Negro engine wiper who had been a close friend of the famous engineer, and who sang them to a jigging melody all his own.

"My husband's real name was John Luther Jones," Mrs. Jones told an interviewer. "He was a lovable lad—six feet four and one-half inches in height, dark-haired and gray-eyed. Always he was in good humor and his Irish heart was as big as his body. All the railroaders were fond of Casey, and his wiper, Wallace Saunders, just worshipped the ground he walked on."

Casey Jones was known far and wide among railroad men, for his peculiar skill with a locomotive whistle.

"You see," said Mrs. Jones, "he established a sort of trade mark for himself by his inimitable method of blowing a whistle. It was a kind of long-drawn-out note that he created, beginning softly, then rising, then dying away almost to a whisper. People living along the Illinois Central right of way between Jackson and Water Valley would turn over in their beds late at night and say: 'There goes Casey Jones,' as he roared by."

After he had put in several years as freight and passenger engineer between Jackson and Water Valley, Casey was transferred early in 1900 to the Memphis-Canton (Miss.) run as throttle-puller of the Illinois Central's crack "Cannonball" train.

Casey and his fireman, Sim Webb, rolled into Memphis from Canton about ten o'clock Sunday night, April 29. They went to the checking-in office and were preparing to go to their homes when Casey heard somebody call out: "Joe Lewis has just been taken with cramps and can't take his train out tonight."

"I'll double back and pull Lewis' old No. 638," Casey volunteered.

At eleven o'clock that rainy Sunday night Casey and Sim Webb clambered aboard the big engine and eased her out of the station and through the South Memphis yards.

'All the switchmen knew by the engine's moans
That the man at the throttle was Casey Jones."

Four o'clock of the 30th of April. The little town of Vaughn, Miss. A long, winding curve just above the town, and a long sidetrack beginning about where the curve ended.

"There's a freight train on the siding," Casey yelled across to Sim Webb.

Knowing the siding there was a long one, and having passed many other freights on it, Casey figured he would do the same this night.

But there were two separate sections of a very long train on the side-track this night. And the rear one was a little too long to get all its length off the main line onto the siding. The freight train crews figured on "sawing by"; that is as soon as the passenger train passed the front part of the first train, it would move forward and the rear freight would move up, thus clearing the main track.

But Casey's speed—about fifty miles an hour—was more than the freight crews bargained for.

But when old 638 was within a hundred feet of the end of the siding the

horrified eyes of Casey Jones and Sim Webb beheld through the gloom the looming shape of several boxcars in motion, swinging across from the main line to the side-track. In a flash both knew there was no earthly way of preventing a smashup.

"Jump, Sim, and save yourself!" was Casey's last order to his fireman. As for himself, Casey threw his engine in reverse and applied the airbrakes—all any engineer could do, and rode roaring 638 into a holocaust of crashing wood that splintered like match boxes. Sim Webb jumped, fell into some bushes and was not injured.

When they took Casey's body from the wreckage (old 638 had plowed through the cars and caboose and turned over on her side a short distance beyond) they found one hand on the whistle cord, the other on the air-brake lever.

"I remember," Sim Webb told Casey's widow, "that as I jumped Casey held down the whistle in a long, piercing scream. I think he must have had in mind to warn the freight conductor in the caboose so he could jump."

Probably no individual, excepting a member of Casey's family, was more affected by the sad news than Wallace Saunders.

A few days later he was going about singing a song to a melody all his own. The air had a lilt that caught the fancy of every one who heard it. But Wallace, honest old soul, had no idea of doing more than singing it as a sort of tribute to his white friend's memory.

But one day a song writer passed through Jackson and heard the song and the details of Casey's tragic death. He went off and changed the words, but retained the lilting refrain and the name of Casey Jones. That was about 1902.

THERE are many railroad men still living who knew and worked with Casey Jones. The affection he aroused among all his acquaintances seems to have been an outstanding characteristic. He was six feet four and one-half inches tall, dark-haired and gray-eyed.

His old friend R. E. Edrington, a fellow engineer on the Illinois Central writes:

"The reputation which Casey enjoyed was richly earned by numerous feats of resourcefulness, skill and downright daring. He could perform feats with his famous 638 that no other engineer could equal with locomotives of the same class, or even with the same engine. Firing for him was a back-breaking and hair-raising job, but his mulatto fireman, Sim Webb, was equal to every demand, and held Casey in almost idolatrous regard, following him from one run to another through his entire career."

A. J. ("Fatty") Thomas, who often ran as conductor on trains pulled by Casey and the 638, writes: "I had often heard the song about Casey Jones, but on account of the phrases in it about the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe, rounder, Frisco, and 'another papa on the Salt Lake Line,' I never figured that the song was intended for my Illinois Central Casey. For he was not a rounder but a car roller, and in my estimation the prince of them all. We had a number of fast men, and since then I have had hundreds of good engineers pull me on different western roads. But I never met the equal of Casey in rustling to get over the road.

"The 'whistle's moan' in the song is right. Casey could just about play a tune on the whistle. He could make the cold chills run up your back with it, and grin all the time. Everybody along the line knew Casey Jones' whistle.

"I never saw him with his mouth closed—he always had a smile or a broad grin. The faster he could get his engine to roll, the happier he was. He would lean out of the cab window to watch his drivers, and when he got her going so fast that the side rods looked solid, he would look at you and grin all over, happy as a boy with his first pair of red boots. Yet he had a reputation as a safe engineer. With all his fast running I never knew of him piling them up, of any but a few derailments and never a rear-ender. He was either lucky, or else his judgment was as nearly perfect as human judgment can be."

Ed Pacey, another conductor who knew Casey Jones, writes: "In the early days of railroading there was a real glamour to the rails. Into this setting Casey, engineer of the Cannonball Express, fitted perfectly. He was a giant and came of a great railroad family. His nickname was derived from his native village, Cayce, Kentucky, pronounced 'Casey.'

"Jones was famous for two things: he was a teetotaler in days when abstinence was rare, and he was the most daring of all engineers in the days when schedules were simply 'get her there and make the time, or come to the office and get your time."

Mr. Pacey lodges a protest against the popular song's line to the effect that Casey Jones' widow informed her orphan children that "you've got another papa on the Salt Lake line." Mr. Pacey chafes at the implied disrespect toward Mrs. Jones in that stanza. "There never was any other papa on the Salt Lake or any other line," he says. "Instead, the widow devoted her life to the hard struggle to maintain herself and educate her three children."

These people buy a battleship —every week!

Meet John S.....and Mary D.....

John works at an electronics plant on Long Island, and makes $85 a week. Almost 10% of it goes into War Bonds.

Mary has been driving rivets into bombers at an airplane plant on the West Coast. She makes $55 a week, and puts 14% of it into War Bonds.

John and Mary are typical of more than 27 million Americans on the Payroll Savings Plan who, every single month, put half a BILLION dollars into War Bonds. That's enough to buy one of those hundred-million-dollar battleships every week, with enough money for an aircraft carrier and three or four cruisers left over.

In addition, John and Mary and the other people on the Payroll Plan have been among the biggest buyers of *extra* Bonds in every War Loan Drive.

They've financed a good share of our war effort all by themselves, and they've tucked away billions of dollars in savings that are going to come in mighty handy for both them and their country later on.

When this war is won, and we start giving credit where credit is due, don't forget John and Mary. After the fighting men, they deserve a place at the top. They've earned it.

You've backed the attack— now speed the Victory!

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What Do *You* Think?

A Readers' Forum

No Glory

I HOPE no one writes a glory book about the war. Perhaps wars can't always be helped; perhaps they have to happen sometimes. But anyone who glorifies war is doing a distinct disservice to humanity.

Hitler did not tell his people the truth about war. He painted it in glory colors, with heroic overtones. On his canvas, the Teutonic race played the glittering rôle of invincible warriors, sweeping aside everything in its path with irresistible magnificence. It was a fascinating picture, dramatic and thrilling and even beautiful, and the German people went to war.

But if Hitler had said to them: "I'll tell you what war is like: It is sleeping in mud and burrowing yourself in the ground like a mole. It is living with filth; it is being away from your loved ones at home; it is having to be under constant discipline, like a criminal. It is turning into an animal, with animal instincts and animal fear. It is living with the thought that you are always heading toward a place where someone will try to kill you in the most violent way. It is living with a foul and horrible stench in your nostrils all the time, the stench of death."

If Hitler had told his people that, then the chances are there never would have been a war.

If anywhere in the newspapers or magazines you read anything that gives you the impression that there is anything romantic or glorious about war, don't believe it. It is a monstrous lie.

War is a foul, stinking, evil, inhuman, nasty, mean thing. It is as un-Godlike as anything can be.

You have a perfect right to distrust —and even hate—anyone who glorifies war.

Sgt. Harold Helfer, USMC.

Bataan Rehearsal

NIGHT had descended upon Bataan. A monkey mumbled in his sleep; in the trees somewhere above our outpost a parrot ruffled his wings.

Sergeant Malone crept to the rear of the dugout. He parked his rifle against the wall.

"Raise anybody on that phone?" the noncom asked.

I shook my head negatively. "The set checks locally but not on the wire. Must be an opened circuit."

Malone was a man who is not easily convinced. He picked up the handset, placed his soiled handkerchief between the hammer and bell in the event the phone worked, and then gave the generator a twist. The handle turned over easily and the phone remained silent.

"Yep," he admitted, "feels like an open line."

Silently the both of us stared at the EE-5.

"Hey, Sarge," a voice called softly from the front of the crude shelter, "come up here! Somebody is coming through the brush!"

We went forward, and the Missouri Kid, Eddie Dodge, pointed out into the jungle.

"Over there!" he whispered. "By those uprooted trees."

I glanced out beyond the length of Dodge's finger and saw the crouching figure among the fallen trees. Malone raised his rifle. The figure arose and moved toward us. As he neared the overgrown foxhole, the stranger coughed.

"It's Carpenter! I'd know that cough anywhere," stated Dodge. He helped the soldier into the dugout and then growled:

"Where ya been for the past five hours? I've been waiting here all this time to swap you a can of hash for a can of those beans you don't like."

Carpenter coughed again and ignored Dodge. He spoke to Malone:

"I traced down the line for five miles. Went down as far as the Command Post or rather where the C. P. was a day ago. It looked as if they pulled out in a hurry. Our line was still tied to the tree—both ends of the wire dangling in mid-air."

"Did you look around the place?" Malone asked.

"Yes, I did. Went about a mile beyond and sighted an enemy bivouac camp, an armored outfit. The C. P. must have been captured or made a fast retreat to the southern end of the peninsula."

"Say, that means that we are cut off and behind the enemy's lines, doesn't it?" interposed Dodge.

Nobody answered the kid from Missouri. Carpenter gave him a can of beans in exchange for a can of hash. We ate in the darkness.

"Say, Sarge," the kid flared up again, "what the devil would we do if Corregidor was captured? Where could we go?"

The question drew an answer from Malone. "We couldn't go anywhere but stay here and be orphans of Uncle Sam until he sent some help to us."

"Couldn't we sneak around the bay and get into Manila?" speculated the kid. Malone pointed out to him that by the time Corregidor fell, Manila would be taken by the invaders.

"Do you know what I would do?" spoke up Carpenter. "I'd beat my way to Manila and become the most sabotaging individual you ever heard of. There are quite a few places a man can hide out in the Mapajo and Tonda districts."

Dodge admitted that it would be an exciting way to fight back, but it lacked romance. He went on to say that he would probably join some mountain tribe and get himself elected king or datu or something. Pick several of the best-looking women of the tribe for wives, then make a business of going after enemy heads.

Malone said he would be more practical. There probably would be a number of small pockets of Americans cut off by the fall of Corregidor. He would try to consolidate the remnants, form a band of guerrillas and use "back-alley" tactics against patrols.

Malone turned to me.

"What would you do, Ted?"

"I don't know, fellas," I told the trio, "just what I would do."

TO this date I have no answer to the question asked by Sergeant Malone five years ago while in the Philippine Division maneuvers on Bataan —maneuvers that were a dress rehearsal for momentous things to follow.

Malone, Dodge and Carpenter extended over another hitch in the Phil-

WE are glad to receive letters from our readers, telling us what you are thinking about—about your business now or your career after the war; the war's effect on you or those dear to you; or if you are in one of the Armed Services, a letter about your recent experiences or expectations for the future—the former within the censorship regulations, of course.

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ippines. I returned to the States in '39. They were on Bataan when the peninsula was invaded by the Nipponese. I wonder if they are carrying out their plans of a few years past.

Sgt. T. Durosco.

No Perfumed Peace

I HAVE just returned from two years—two in time but twenty in memory—in the Jap-infested Pacific, but it took BLUE BOOK and Willard Price's article "Japan's Islands of Mystery" to make me realize fully what I have been through. I wish every sailor could read the article.

If I were a writing-man and not a fighting-man, I might get a message over to America about the Japs. But in my plain sailor fashion I will simply warn that if you who stay home want us who hope to come back permanently, to continue to love our America, please for the sake of our dead buddies, don't accept any peace short of complete destruction of Japan as a world-power.

I have swabbed too much blood from the decks of our ships not to know how the boys who fight really feel. Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian—we have been in those rivers of blood. We are going back just as soon as they get through with this stuff they call rehabilitation.

BLUE BOOK, do all you can to arouse America against a perfumed peace with Japan. We who will be out there will finish the job.

John L. Whitehurst.

Faith in Triumph over Evil

A FEW months ago I was unable to conceive of a compensation that could ever equalize the human loss in war, and I had become bitter against all the things that had caused my only son to be fighting with his life across the seas. Now my boy is dead. My grief is the same grief that has been felt in the hearts of thousands all over the world; but through mine I found the compensation I doubted. I believe it has atoned for the too-early death of my boy.

It was a long time before I was convinced of his death. My mind grasped frantically at every small hope my imagination pushed before it, but after this respite of uncertainty came the period when hope was spent. Death-like days, being aware of nothing but the weight of hurt. The next period that followed, the one of hate, revenge, and the craving to kill, was the worst and longest lasting.

My tears finally came the day I could go into his room. I knelt beside his bed and felt their steady flow begin to ease the tightness within me. I thought of the plans my boy had, his ambitions and his ideals. They were the best. I thought of my own life, my work and accomplishments, even their purpose turned worthless by the despairing power of futility!

My need was far beyond the aid my friends could give. It reached for some great light of reason, of understanding. It touched that light in prayer, the first since I was ten. But the God I found was not the God of childhood. I found the Master of life and death, the eternal Teacher—the infinite Truth. My last shred of ego had relinquished its urge in a mundane world, and in my humility I found the communing spirit that unifies a man with God. My visions and horizons of thought hadn't been broad enough to embrace the law of our mortality. Our bodies are the visible fragments of an unseen whole, our limits the measuring-stick of distance yet to climb from mortal to immortal.

I have come to believe in the incessant growth of the human spirit and in some plan by which that growth is directed. Believing this gives me faith in the triumph of good over evil, of human strength over human weakness. I have come to believe that through the intense suffering from this war, there will be new souls born who will be able to find and to create the only real peace for humanity.

M. H. C.

A Guy Named Joe

A Sports Quiz by Bud Cornish

JOSEPH is a grand old name, but the truly great Joes of the sports world aren't so many that you can rattle them off by the dozens. However, if you follow your athletics, maybe you can fill in a letter for each dot after the twenty Joes and earn yourself immortality as the Quiz King who got a hundred. But if not, don't be downhearted. Some are stickers. Eighty, at five points a question, is going some, and seventy is even good.

(1) Joe .....
Seven world titles have been won under this Joe's master-minding.

(2) Joe .....
In Alabammy he was born *Joe Barrow;* and a lot of lads wish he'd stayed in Alabammy.

(3) Joe .....
It was —— to Evers to Chance, immortalized in poetry.

(4) Joe .....
He fought champion Jack Johnson many times. He was colored, too. The first letter of his last name is J, if that'll help you.

(5) Joe .....
Baseball's top pinch-hitter in 1943. Still a big league pilot.

(6) Joe .....
The Barbados Demon at 145 pounds, he fought 'em heavier in the olden days. W starts him.

(7) Joe .....
He was "Jumping Joe" at the hot corner for great New York Yankee teams.

(8) Joe .....
Notre Dame football knew him, and then professional wrestling saw him.

(9) Joe .....
"Flash" won the batting championship one year—and how a certain famous team could have used him in 1944, at the finish!

(10) Joe .....
He hit safely in 56 games in a row!

(11) Joe .....
Stormy petrel of golf and its top trick-shot artist.

(12) Joe .....
The late Golden Voice of Madison Square Garden.

(13) Joe ....
Sculling champion many times and James E. Sullivan award-winner in 1939. He leaves the "e" off the end.

(14) Joe .....
He fought Jim Corbett on a barge and lost in 27 rounds. The gift letter to start you is C.

(15) Joe ....
Pop and Grandpop remember his duels with Walter Johnson when he pitched for the Boston Red Sox. He's an ex-Yale coach.

(16) Joe .....
Big-league first baseman who always is "coo-ll."

(17) Joe .....
Gone now, but his shriek, "We wuz robbed!" lives on. He won a world-championship with his voice, shouting "Foul!"

(18) Joe ....
Notre Dame speed merchant. You know him as "Greg," but his first name is Joseph.

(19) Joe .....
Ducky-Wucky of St. Louis, Brooklyn and New York.

(20) Joe .....
"Shoeless Joe" who might have been the greatest of the hitters but for the Black Sox scandal of 1919.

(Answers on page 96)

A Twice-told Tale from our December, 1932, issue.

by William Makin

The Desert of

"AND you believe in Allah?"

"I believe in God, for I know He exists."

"You *know* He exists! A sweeping statement, my friend. Even the greatest of philosophers have hesitated to make that claim."

"But the revelation can be discovered by anyone."

"Where? In the Bible? In the Koran?"

"No. In Schubert's 'Unfinished Symphony.'"

"But have you the audacity, my dear fellow, to claim all that for a mere piece of music?"

Paul Rodgers smiled, and stroked the back of his flaming red head.

"I assure you, Selworthy," he said, in his quiet dominant tone, "that if ever I was asked to prove the existence of God, I would take my questioner to hear a great orchestra play the 'Unfinished Symphony.' When there comes the call of the horn just before the *reprise* in the second movement, on the octave of E, *pianissimo*, four times repeated, then, in that great moment, I know God exists. And the little bespectacled Schubert, who suffered and sorrowed and died young, also knew that God existed. He gave the world his vision in the 'Unfinished Symphony.'"

Adrian Selworthy plucked nervously at his little fair mustache.

"Well, perhaps you're right, Rodgers," he said. "But that music is a little too ethereal for me. I prefer—"

The rest of his sentence was lost in the crash of sounding brass. A servant was hammering a gong announcing that dinner was served.

"The music that commands," laughed Selworthy, indicating the dim regions below, from which the gong had sounded.

Both men, garbed in evening dress, stood on a balcony. Their conversation, their habit, even the food they were about to eat, suggested all the sophistication of modern civilization. And yet, standing on this balcony, the two men were within a few hundred yards of savagery.

The balcony hung from a crazy house overlooking the harbor of Hodeidah. It was the port of mysterious dhows. Arab cutthroats of every variety sooner or later jumped from a dhow and waded waist-deep toward the rotting jetty of this strange port. Paul Rodgers—an Anglo-American of mysterious past and many adventures, whose exploits as an Intelligence officer had made him known among the natives as the Red Wolf of Arabia—was never able to resist the fascination of Hodeidah. On his voyage to Aden he had landed there, and was now enjoying the hospitality of Adrian Selworthy, a young Englishman who was known as adviser to the ruling sheik, Ibn Rashid.

Adrian Selworthy lived in one of those tall, crazy houses that had been so fretted and carved by Arab artistry that the whole structure seemed in danger of collapse. From a distance those houses had a startling resemblance to Elizabethan inns, and there was something Elizabethan about the pale young man with the little fair mustache who lived in one of them.

The Sheik Ibn Rashid had a great respect for his European adviser. He appreciated the acute mind behind that bloodless mask. It was a political mind. Selworthy, by sheer diplomacy, had brought all the tribes of the Southwest Desert into one great group, and by tactics that were as subtle as they were Machiavellian, had set Ibn Rashid to rule over them. Ibn Rashid thanked him in lavish Arabian fashion. . . .

"I ought to have told you," said Selworthy to Rodgers, as they were descending the stairs, "that I have another guest to dinner tonight."

"Oh, who is he?" asked the Intelligence officer indifferently.

"He's a man who sells beds," murmured Selworthy.

Rodgers, one foot poised above the stair, stopped.

"A man who sells beds!" he exclaimed.

Adrian Selworthy chuckled. In the dim light of the staircase, his pale face seemed to have the phosphorescent glow of a ghost.

"Yes. Why not?" he asked.

Again Rodgers stroked his hair.

"A strange occupation!" he murmured. "Does he sell many beds?"

"Hundreds—hundreds," replied Selworthy. "The Arabs seem to have developed a passion for bedsteads within the past year, and Talata is landing another eighty beds from the tramp steamer we watched coming toward the coast this afternoon."

"Talata?"

"Yes, he's the man who sells the bedsteads. Josef Talata, he calls himself. Says he's Italian Swiss, but he looks Teutonic. Speaks English excellently. A fat, jovial fellow. You'll like him."

Rodgers nodded.

"I'm sure I shall," he murmured. "I'm even anxious to meet him."

He continued his descent of the staircase, humming aimlessly.

"That's a fascinating melody," said Selworthy, behind him.

Rodgers looked back.

"From the 'Unfinished Symphony,'" he replied. "Another proof of the Deity."

But Selworthy was looking over Red Rodgers' shoulder. A fat, swarthy man was gazing toward them, his rubicund face wreathed in smiles.

"Good evening, Mr. Selworthy," he cried.

"Good evening, Talata. How's business?"

Singing Sands

"Flourishing," smiled the fat man.

He held out a pudgy but exquisitely manicured hand as the two men reached the last stair. . . .

They sat down to dinner. Rodgers sipped appreciatively at the Tokay which the Arab servants poured gently into his glass. Josef Talata, fat and smiling, gurgled his joy, his obvious jollity, throughout the meal. Like so many Europeans, he spoke English with an American directness.

"You sure do yourself well here, Mr. Selworthy," he grinned.

Selworthy looked slightly bored.

"It would be foolish to live otherwise," he drawled. "My throat is rather delicate, and Arab knives are keen. Frankly, I am an interloper in this Arab state, and I don't suppose I'm particularly loved. But I do my best to make the Arabs respect me."

"How?" asked Josef Talata.

The bloodless hand of Selworthy indicated the polished table and its glittering glass, the walls of the room draped in rich tapestries, and the array of quiet, efficient servants.

"By living like a prince," he murmured. "Nothing impresses more than luxury. The Arabs love a man who has the good sense to display his riches. They have only contempt for the poor Bedouin of the desert. Have you ever read the Arabian Nights?"

"Never," smiled Talata.

"You'll find that the hero or the successful one in all those stories is invariably the sheik or grand vizier."

"And you, my dear Selworthy, are a modern grand vizier, eh?" interposed Rodgers.

"Exactly. And it behooves me to live like a grand vizier."

Rodgers sipped again from his glass.

"An excellent philosophy, Selworthy, but a little too aristocratic for these modern times," he said quietly. "Granted your methods capture the respect of the Arabs, they will not capture the hearts of the Arabs. And in a tight corner I would rather have stout hearts than fear-inspired respect."

Talata drained his glass with greedy joy.

"I agree with you, Rodgers. I think I know something about the Arabs. I've journeyed with them through the desert. And I believe in getting to their hearts every time."

"Nonsense!" Adrian Selworthy smiled. "You're both sentimentalists. . . . Let us go into the next room for coffee. I have a cigar, Talata, that I'd like your opinion on."

"All your cigars are good," sighed Talata, rising regretfully from the table.

Selworthy led the way into a room of easy-chairs and Arab mosaics. A piano crossed one corner.

"Do you know the Arabs well, Rodgers?" asked the genial Swiss, ensconcing himself in an easy-chair.

"Not very well."

"A wonderful race—marvelous history—artists, too."

A servant handed him a cup of Arab coffee. A box of cigars was pushed toward him.

"You, I understand, are bringing them the benefits of modern civilization," murmured Rodgers, waving the cigars aside.

Talata's face wreathed itself in smiles. "I bring them beds," he said.

"And they like beds?"

Two dark eyes swiveled toward him. His face was blandly innocent. A chuckle escaped the Swiss.

"They love 'em," he replied. "I'm landing eighty here tonight." He turned toward his host. "By the way, Mr. Selworthy—I hope you'll excuse me mentioning it, but I wanted to know whether you'd pass that consignment through for me tonight. I want to set off with a caravan into the desert tomorrow."

Selworthy, reclining in a cloud of blue smoke, nodded.

"Certainly, Talata. Who are the beds for?"

"For the Sheik Mubarak."

LIKE a resurrected man, Adrian Selworthy rose slowly and gazed at the Swiss.

"For the Sheik Mubarak!" he said. "Then your caravan goes to Sana, a journey of nearly two hundred miles?"

"That's so," said Talata. "Is there any objection?"

Selworthy sank back into his chair.

"No," he said briefly. "But it's a devil of a journey. Not many waterholes, and the world's worst desert."

Talata chuckled.

"I do not mind," he murmured. "I have made many such journeys into the desert."

Rodgers smiled ingenuously.

"Yours is indeed a romantic occupation, Mr. Talata," he murmured. "I never knew Arabs to be so passionately fond of beds. In fact, it intrigues me to speculate why the Shiek Mubarak should buy eighty beds."

Josef Talata laughed.

"Sixty, to be exact, Mr. Rodgers. The other twenty I leave here in Hodeidah."

"Even so, sixty beds!"

"It is said," smirked the Swiss, "that the Sheik Mubarak has sixty wives. Maybe he ordered them for his harem."

"Verily, the West has come to the East," murmured Rodgers. "And how do you convey sixty beds across the desert, Mr. Talata?"

"By camels, and by camels alone."

Rodgers nodded in a preoccupied fashion and wandered idly to the piano. But he stopped with his long, slender fingers on the keyboard as the voice of Adrian Selworthy spoke through the blue haze of smoke.

"I ought to warn you, Talata, that your journey may be dangerous."

"Dangerous! Why?"

Talata seemed alarmed.

"At the present moment the Sheik Mubarak is contemplating revolt against the Sheik Ibn Rashid. Of course it is just bluff on the part of the old fellow; but political relations are slightly strained. That is why I suggest your journey might be dangerous. The time is not propitious for legitimate trading."

Talata laughed.

"Oh, is that all!" he said, in a relieved tone. "Thanks for the tip, Mr. Selworthy, but I never let the political situation worry me. I'll go off with my beds tomorrow; and believe me, I'll get through with 'em. And what can be more suggestive of peace than sixty beds delivered to the Sheik Mubarak?"

He laughed loudly. But the pale face of Selworthy was troubled.

"I'm not so certain that an Arab lying on a bed thinking is not more dangerous than an Arab careering about the desert on a camel," he murmured.

Talata shook his head mirthfully. At the same moment the fingers of Rodgers rippled lightly over the keys of the piano. Idly they strayed; and then the vague, unsubstantial music of Debussy began to tremble forth.

Talata yawned slightly. He rose, and walked over to the European adviser to the Sheik Ibn Rashid.

"Will you think me very rude, Mr. Selworthy, if I run away and go down to the harbor?" he said. "I've a good deal of work before me if I'm to move off into the desert tomorrow."

Selworthy rose. "That's all right, Talata. I understand. You're a business man. Thank God, I'm not."

They shook hands gravely.

"And I'm to take it the consignment is cleared?" asked Talata.

"Of course."

"Thank you." He turned to Rodgers, whose fingers were moving with exquisite artistry over the keyboard. "Good night, Mr. Rodgers."

"Good night."

Rodgers whispered it over his shoulder, for he was engrossed in the music. He did not turn his head to see the departure of the man who sold beds. His shoulders hunched themselves over the piano as though his whole being were intent on torturing the very essence of expression out of the piano. And the queer, unsubstantial music of Debussy came forth in a sort of magical dissonance.

Selworthy returned to the room. With his pale face he gazed at the hunched figure over the piano.

"What is that you're playing?" he asked suddenly.

His guest was lost in a medley of his own creating.

"'Cathedrals under the Sea,'" he murmured.

A smile crossed the pale face of Selworthy.

"A strange title."

The red head of the man at the piano nodded an acquiescence.

"Almost as strange as—bedsteads in the desert," he said, and then bent again over the keyboard.

NEXT day they watched the collection of camels being loaded with the lacquered steelwork of sixty bedsteads.

Rodgers and Adrian Selworthy stood outside the store of a Parsee merchant, Dadaboy Dinshaw, who was the agent for the man who sold beds. Twenty of these bedsteads were already reposing within the shadows of his store. Sixty were being roped to the mangy backs of protesting, whimpering camels.

Josef Talata, in thin white riding-garb, and perspiring beneath an enormous sun-helmet, paced among the Arabs and camels that made up his convoy, crying commands in Arabic. Yet despite his preoccupation and his evident urgency, he never lost that jovial expression. More than once his face was turned toward the two Englishmen regarding these activities. He grinned pleasantly. And under the aurora of that smile, the Arabs lashing the bedsteads worked and sweated furiously.

"A man who is happy at his job," murmured Selworthy, nodding toward the grinning Talata.

"Yes, too happy," commented Rodgers.

Selworthy turned toward him.

"My dear Rodgers, what's twisting that strange mind of yours?"

Rodgers' blue eyes gazed into the dust and medley of camels and Arabs.

"A strange caravan for the desert," he muttered.

"Strange!" Selworthy laughed. "My dear fellow, it's just comic, that's all. You're merely regarding a man who sells beds going about his daily work. I repeat, it's comic."

Rodgers sighed.

"That's just the point that is worrying me. It *is* comic—camels with bedsteads over their humps—damnably comic. They don't fit into the landscape. Bedsteads in the desert!"

Again Selworthy laughed.

"Well, let us hope that they will be regarded as an omen of peace to the Sheik Mubarak. I'm not anxious to have any more trouble in the desert."

At that moment there was a loud shout from the Arabs. The last bedstead had been lashed. The camels moaned and slobbered their dismay as one by one they were urged from their squatting postures in the sand. While the din was at its height, Josef Talata came over to the two Englishmen. He held out his hand to Selworthy.

"Good-by, Mr. Selworthy. And thanks for what you've done."

"Nothing at all," smiled Selworthy.

The jovial face turned to Rodgers.

"Good-by, Mr. Rodgers."

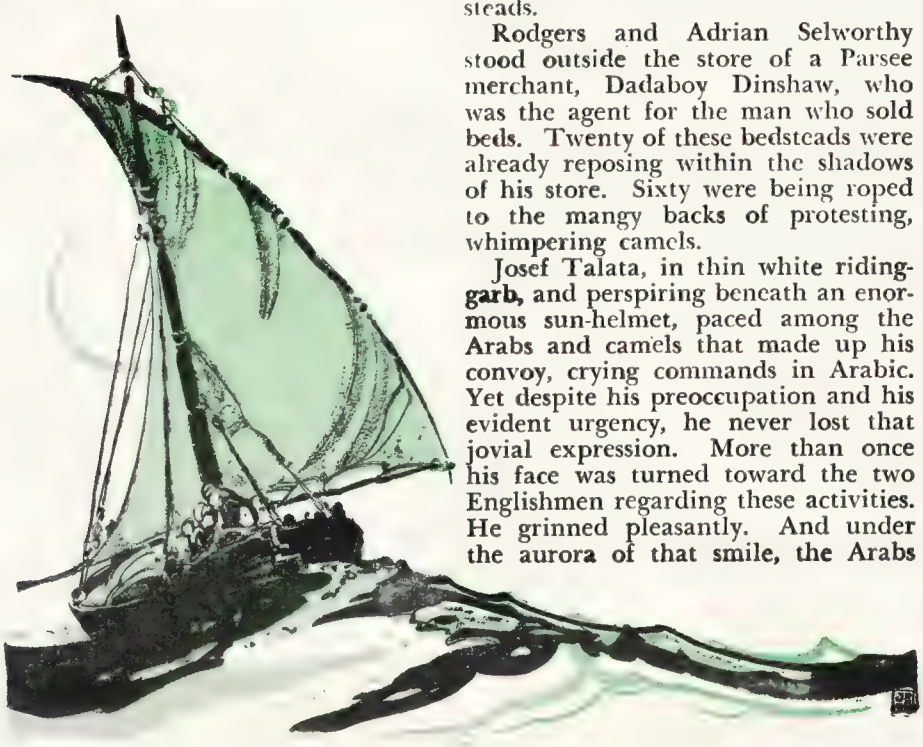
"*Au revoir*," murmured Rodgers, smiling in turn.

The fat Swiss regarded him for a moment. But the jovial expression never left his features. Then, with a parting grin, he turned away and walked toward his camel. In practiced Arab fashion he settled himself behind the hump. His riding-boots kicked against the mangy sides. With a protesting roar, the beast rose to its feet, and lurched forward to a place at the head of the caravan. An Arab guide galloped his camel alongside.

Talata twisted his fat body in the saddle so that he faced his caravan of Arabs, camels and bedsteads.

"Forward!" he cried in Arabic, and simultaneously his camel moved.

And so he led them into the yellow sands and sunshiny horizon that stretched endlessly in front. The camels stirred the dust and sand at the feet of the two Englishmen as they stood outside the store of the Parsee and watched the cavalcade go by. Men shouted. Bells tinkled. The



bedsteads rattled. And with their supercilious mouths dripping, the camels lurched past.

At last they were nothing but a cloud of dust against the horizon. Rodgers, whose blue eyes had been following them with a puzzled expression, sighed and turned to regard the Parsee store of Dadaboy Dinshaw.

"WHAT now?" asked Adrian Selworthy.

Rodgers walked slowly toward the store.

"I think I'll buy a bed," he murmured.

Something like an expression of horror crossed the pale face of the European adviser.

"Do you mean to say, Rodgers, that you're going to buy one of those damned bedsteads and bring it into my house?"

"Why not?" asked his guest innocently.

"But they're monstrously ugly," protested Selworthy.

"Exactly. But I recall your saying last night that you were not so certain an Arab lying on a bed thinking isn't more dangerous than an Arab careering about the desert on a camel."

"Perhaps I did. But how does that explain your reason for buying one of these beds?"

"I want to lie on one—and think," murmured Rodgers. And with a nod he walked into the store.

The inscrutable, *café-au-lait* face of Dadaboy Dinshaw showed no sign of surprise when Rodgers expressed a desire to purchase a lacquered bedstead. Perhaps the liquid brown eyes opened a shade more, but that was all.

"Certainlee, Mr. Rodgers. And when you like eet?"

"This afternoon. I want to rest on it."

"Ver' good, Mr. Rodgers."

An hour later the appalled Adrian Selworthy watched the fearsomely ugly contraption pass into his house overlooking the harbor of Hodeidah. Later he strolled into a room and discovered Red Rodgers in an extraordinary yellow dressing-gown, stretched at full length on the bed and filling the room with cigarette smoke. The vision affronted Selworthy's aesthetic tastes.

"A yellow dressing-gown, a black bedstead, and a flaming crop of red hair," he murmured. "It's like an absinthe drunken painting out of Montparnasse."

Rodgers grinned.

"The clash of colors suits the clash of ideas," he said. "I'm still wondering why these damned bedsteads should be wanted in the desert."

Selworthy sighed.

"Wouldn't it be better to accept the simple and obvious idea—that they're being taken into the desert to be slept upon?"

"I know the Arab," retorted Rodgers.

Selworthy paced the room through the swathes of cigarette smoke. The sunken immobility of his friend irritated him. Once again he gazed distastefully at the yellow dressing-gown and the reclining crop of red hair.

"I really believe you glory in that carroty hair of yours," he said.

Rodgers rose, a look of mild surprise on his face.

"Of course I do," he replied. "Read your history books, and discover what an important part red hair has played in history."

"A ravisher of kings, eh?" suggested Selworthy.

Rodgers laughed.

"Rebellious red hair! A symbol of revolt. And yet a passionate love of life. You'll find the red-haired people finely rebellious spirits, Selworthy. And how we are envied by the neutral-haired crowd—the mousy browns, the brassy yellows, and the indifferent blacks! There's a theme for a poem. Do you still write verse, my dear fellow?"

With a snort Selworthy stalked out of the room—and Rodgers sank back.

His preoccupation lasted for the remainder of the day. After dinner Rodgers lounged to the piano and began playing a showy piece by Liszt. Selworthy sat enthralled. But later the player lapsed into ineffectual improvisations, while the European adviser lounged listlessly about the room. Stopping in the middle of an intricate affair of counterpoint, Rodgers whirled about on his stool.

"Have you a map?" he asked.

"A map!" repeated Selworthy blankly.

"Yes, of the desert over which our friend Talata and his sixty beds are journeying."

"I've a map of sorts," replied the other, and gave orders to one of the Arab servants.

A moment later they were both bent over a rough scroll.

"Here is Sana, the headquarters of the Sheik Mubarak," said Selworthy, laying a finger on a dot on the map. "And here is the two hundred miles of desert"—as his finger traveled over a blank space—"through which Talata journeys. It's a bad stretch of desert, as I told the fellow. Some of the Arabs call it the Desert of the Singing Sands."

"The Desert of the Singing Sands!" murmured Rodgers. "It sounds interesting." Then he went on as though speaking to himself. "With those bedsteads the caravan cannot travel more than four miles an hour. Talata has now been gone for six hours, which means that he is twenty-four miles into the desert. Probably he's camping now."

"Yes, I expect he's settling down for the night."

Rodgers yawned.

"And I think I'll settle down for the night," he said. "Good night, my dear fellow."

And with a nod to the surprised Selworthy, he lounged out of the room. . . .

Next day Rodgers looked as though he had not slept. He did not speak at breakfast.

"You slept badly?" asked Selworthy.

His guest sighed. "I didn't sleep at all."

"It's that damned bedstead," commented the other. "Send it back to the Parsee, and have done with this silly business."

But Rodgers persisted in his strange madness. At dinner that evening he demanded the map once more, and pored over it.

"Our commercial traveler with his sixty beds should be here this evening," he muttered, stabbing the map with his finger. "Over fifty miles from Hodeidah."

Selworthy shrugged.

"Well on the way to the Sheik Mubarak," he commented. "What are you going to do about it, Rodgers?"

The Intelligence officer glanced wistfully at the piano, then pulled himself together, as for a great effort.

"I think I shall go to bed," he said.

And so night came sweeping across the Red Sea, and shrouded in darkness that room where a man in a yellow dressing-gown lounged listlessly on a black-lacquered bedstead.

IT was four o'clock in the morning when Adrian Selworthy was roused from his slumbers by an abrupt shake of the shoulders. He blinked. That red-haired figure in the yellow dressing-gown stood by the side of his bed. Rodgers' eyes were bright and feverish.

"Selworthy! I want the finest camel in Hodeidah."

Selworthy blinked again.

"Well, you shall have it, my dear fellow," he yawned. "We'll discuss it after breakfast."

"I want it now—at once."

The tone was peremptory. The European adviser felt nettled.

"But why?"

"To journey to the Desert of Singing Sands."

"But that's a hundred miles' journey."

"I know. I must get there before Josef Talata and his sixty bedsteads."

"Talata and his sixty bedsteads! I don't understand. What have they to do with your journey?"

"Everything. Those sixty bedsteads must never reach the Sheik Mu-

barak. I've discovered the secret. It's just come to me. What a fool I've been! Quick, Selworthy, the finest camel in Hodeidah."

Undoubtedly the fellow had gone mad—Adrian Selworthy had no doubts about it. All this came of sleeping on a damned iron bedstead—the *idée-fixe*. And now this red-haired madman was babbling for a camel!

With a groan of despair the European adviser slid out of bed. He clapped his hands. A sleepy Arab shuffled in. He gave orders that the red-haired madman should be introduced to the best camel-dealer in Hodeidah, at once, and allowed the choice of the finest beast.

"Thanks, my dear fellow," said Rodgers. "I shan't see you again for some days. But I hope to tell you a story then that will amuse you. *Au revoir!*"

"Go to the devil!" growled Selworthy, and yawning in the face of the madman in the yellow dressing-gown, he turned over and went to sleep again.

Before Selworthy awoke for breakfast, Rodgers had been lost in that pink horizon, a solitary figure rising and falling with the swift stride of his racing camel.

There was no doubt that he had the best camel in Hodeidah. It was neither too fat nor too thin. The hump was of hard, fatless muscle, and from the manner in which the beast carried its head, it pleased Rodgers from the beginning. He did not spare it. Throughout the day he kept it going at a good jog-trot, its long legs going like huge pistons. A small sack of flour and a water-bag dangled from the saddle. And despite the sea of sand-dunes which rolled away into the desert from Hodeidah, he had covered forty miles, when a convenient water-hole decided him to camp for the night.

SOLITARY in the desert, Rodgers was at his happiest. He had discarded European clothes for the *kuftan* of the Arab. A strip of flapping white cloth hid his red hair. With his face burnt half black by sun and wind, he passed easily for a Bedouin. Before settling for the night he examined the camel from Hodeidah once again. Upon this scraggy beast depended the whole adventure. It squatted in the sand, its supercilious mouth engaged in chewing a piece of cactus that it had discovered. Despite the forty miles through the sand, it seemed in excellent condition.

He rested no more than four hours. Wrapped in his *kuftan* and couched against a sand-dune, he slept peacefully. But moonlight was still flooding the desert when he rose, climbed into the saddle and urged the protesting camel to its feet. Then once again his beast padded silently into that sea of sand, the huge legs pounding away. And squatting on its back in a dirty *kuftan*, Rodgers of the Red Sea smiled somberly to himself.

"The Desert of Singing Sands," he whispered, and urged his camel to even further efforts.

"THE Desert of Singing Sands," said the Arab guide to Josef Talata.

His brown arm pointed to the horizon where the sand-dunes rose and fell like an angry sea.

"Do we pass through that desert to reach Sana?" asked the Swiss.

The Arab guide narrowed his eyes.

"It would make the journey shorter, but it is not wise," he said briefly.

"Why?"

"It is a strange desert. There are jinn in it."

"Am I a child, that you talk to me of jinn?" snarled Talata in Arabic.

The Arab grinned.

"One believes in jinn—in the desert," he replied. "Our route lies away from the Desert of the Singing Sands."

"Too slow—too slow," growled Talata. "The Sheik Mubarak waits for his beds. It would be better to risk the wrath of the jinn, and—"

A shouting from the rear of the caravan turned him round in his saddle. He gazed back over the sixty lacquered bedsteads lashed across the backs of mangy camels, to the group of Arabs who brought up the rear of the caravan. They were pointing across the desert.

"What are they shouting about?" asked Talata.

The Arab guide gazed in the same direction.

"They see a man on a camel," he replied.

Talata stopped his camel and gazed in the distance.

"I see—nothing."

Once more the Arab guide smiled.

"You will see him through your glasses, master," he said.

The Swiss sought his binoculars, and turned them in the direction pointed by the guide. Even then he could only just discern the lope of a camel and a figure perched by the hump.

When Talata stopped, the whole caravan halted. Even the long line of beasts carrying the bedsteads turned instinctively to gaze at this solitary figure racing out of the horizon.

"A man in a great hurry," murmured the guide. "His camel has been ridden to the bones."

Josef Talata noticed that one of the Arabs was fingering an old rifle, nervously. Evidently this man racing toward them had something of the frightening quality of those jinn in which the men of the desert believed.

"By all the powers, he looks like a jinni," muttered the guide, as though answering Talata's thoughts.

Again the Swiss focused his binoculars.

"He looks to me like—a hunchback!" he said aloud.

"A hunchback!"

The Arab guide was plainly disturbed.

"A hunchback—from Hodeidah!"

The cry came from the Arabs in the rear of the caravan. And in that cry was something of the awe in which all Arabs hold the deformed.

And now the solitary figure crouched on the back of a racing camel was almost upon them. The beast, ghostlike with the white dust of travel smothering its mangy flanks, raised a head and whinnied. At that sound all the camels of the caravan sent back an answering whine. And the Arabs in the rear raised their hands in greeting.

"It *is* a hunchback," muttered the Arab guide.

ON reaching the rear of the caravan, the man brought his camel to a standstill and slipped easily from the saddle. As he stood beside his beast, Talata from the distance could see the strange contrast of the hump on the camel and the hump on the newcomer's back. And the fact that the hunchback was covered from head to foot with that same ghost-like dust of travel suggested that the jinn had attempted, in the fashion of the Arabian Nights, to change the man into a camel. A crooked figure among the tall, straight Arabs, the hunchback talked and gesticulated like a man born to command.

Illustrations drawn in 1932 by John Clymer

One of the Arabs came to the head of the caravan.

"He is a hunchback, from Hodeidah," he explained. "He rides to Sana with messages for the Sheik Mubarak. The messages are important, and must be carried in haste. He begs that he may be permitted to join the safety of our caravan against the Bedouins."

Despite the uncouth Arabic, Josef Talata understood.

"Bring the hunchback before me," he ordered.

The Arab gave a call. It was answered. A moment later, the crooked figure plodded through the sand and stood before Talata, who gazed down upon him from the saddle's height.

"Your name?" he asked.

"Dar Kobar."

"I have not heard of you. I am a friend of the Sheik Mubarak."

The crooked figure smothered in white dust did not hesitate.

"The jackal slinks and is not seen," he said. "I am but a carrier of messages."

"Important messages, eh?" asked Talata, eying him shrewdly.

"Most important," whispered the hunchback. He gave a quick glance round. "It is the signal for the Brethren of the Black Tents to ride forth and slay their enemies."

"I understand." A faint flush mounted the cheeks of the Swiss. His face wreathed itself in a jovial smile. "You shall go with us to the Sheik Mubarak."

The hunchback was eying the bedsteads strapped to the camels.

"I wish, master, to travel in great haste," he murmured. "These are not messages to sleep with at water-holes."

Josef Talata nodded.

"Neither are these bedsteads to sleep with at water-holes. I too am in haste to reach Sana and the Sheik Mubarak."

The hunchback gave a smile that was as twisted as his own body.

"Then you will take the quickest journey," he murmured, "through the Desert of the Singing Sands."

"Do you know it?" asked Talata.

"I have traveled it many times, master."

"But this fellow fears it, because of the jinn," said Talata, pointing to the Arab guide beside him.

"The jinn!" There was contempt in the voice of the hunchback.

"He *is* a jinni, master," quavered the Arab guide.

Harshly, the hunchback laughed.

"Will you let me take this fellow's place?" he asked. "I will lead your caravan through the Desert of the Singing Sands."

Talata eyed him in silence for a moment. Then his face assumed its inevitable joviality.

"And so you shall," he cried. "Bring your camel to my side. You shall tell me stories of these desert jinn as we ride together."

The hunchback bowed, and scrambled back to the rear. There he mounted his racing camel and rode toward the Swiss. And as he went to take his place at the head of that strange caravan, one of the Arabs whispered:

"Ahee! Truly he is a jinni. For not only is his back twisted into a shape of a camel's hump, but I saw that his hair flames like the sun."

NOW they were in the Desert of the Singing Sands. Despite its name, it was at the moment a Desert of Silence. Even the camels ceased their whining, and the whole of that strange caravan plodded like ghosts in another world.

One night had been spent round the camp-fires, with the hunchback enlivening all with tales that Scheherazade would have bartered with Time for a chance of hearing. Huddled in his ragged and travel-stained *kuftan,* this crooked man had held them all with desert stories and the adventures of jinn. Even the fat and jovial Talata had listened entranced.

"You're a liar—but a magnificent liar," he had laughed, before twisting into his sleeping-bag for the night.

And while the fires smoldered into ashes, while the camels rested in statuesque immobility, the Arabs of the caravan dreamed of the fantasies that filled the desert through which they traveled.

But now, beneath a brassy sky, they were experiencing a reality. They were engulfed in an awful emptiness. Men ceased their talk. The long legs of the camels plodded through the heavy sand with a silence that suggested heavy pads on the feet. Josef Talata felt the heat and the silence like a blanket on his mind. It was suffocating him.

"Who was the fool who called the desert the Garden of Allah?" he cried aloud suddenly. Then he drew in his breath sharply, for he had ripped that veil of silence.

AS the hunchback replied, his face twisted into a smile. He gazed up at the fat Swiss.

"A desert of devils," he whispered.

Talata swung round on him.

"Be quiet! You and your damned jinn!" he cried.

Then he dragged forth a handkerchief to mop the perspiration from his face. He seemed to shrink into himself in that spacious yet smothering emptiness. The cruel sun made him shrink. The white sand was like a terrible storm frozen solid at its height. It was as though the whole earth had been heaving in a gigantic turmoil, and Death had passed over the face of the earth. Wandering through these sands, one believed in the awful might of Jehovah. Those brassy skies could send down annihilation like a bolt. Lot's wife had been changed into a pillar of salt. Swift death!

"Curse the desert!" whispered Josef Talata, and gazed round fearfully. Only the grin of the hunchback met his gaze. "How many more miles to the Sheik Mubarak?" he asked.

"Another fifty miles, and our camels should be greeting the camels of the Sheik," replied the hunchback.

"Does the Sheik Mubarak ride through this desert?"

The grin of the hunchback widened.

"No man rides through this desert except those who fear not devils or jinn."

Josef Talata laughed aloud.

"A thousand devils will not stop me from taking those bedsteads to the Sheik Mubarak," he cried.

"Ahee! The bedsteads are important, eh, my master?" ventured the hunchback.

A heavy eyelid drooped in the fat face.

"Very important."

Once again he laughed, a harsh laugh with no merriment in it. It was a flout to the silence. And it died away on the lips of Josef Talata as he saw the hunchback on his camel with his head cocked at one side in an attitude of listening.

"What's the matter?" he whispered.

"Ssh!" The hunchback lifted a warning hand. "Don't you hear it, master?"

The hunchback sprawled forward and brought the Swiss rolling to the ground.

Instinctively the whole caravan had halted. It became as immobile as that static storm of sand. Josef Talata flung back the draperies that shaded his head and listened intently.

"There is nothing—nothing," he whispered. "It's this cursed silence. It's got your nerves."

The hunchback did not move. Neither did he lower his hand.

"By Allah, but there *is* something," he said. "Listen again, master!"

The saddle on Talata's camel creaked as he flung back his body, impatiently. But he listened once again. This time he heard something. It was like the droning on a single note of some musical instrument, in the far distance—like a phonograph-needle caught in the plowed groove of a revolving record.

"I hear a queer sound," he whispered. "What is it?"

A muttering arose among the Arabs at the rear of the caravan. The camels were swinging their heads in the eerie fashion of caged beasts.

"THE singing sands!" cried the hunchback. "The jinn are stirring them. We must ride—ride fast."

The face of the Swiss paled.

"Why?"

The hunchback pointed to the empty horizon, whence came that droning note.

"A storm sweeps toward us. There are no sandstorms to equal those stirred up by the devils of the Desert of the Singing Sands. By Allah, we must ride."

And kicking his heels into the flanks of his long-legged racing camel, the hunchback launched forth as though shot from a catapult.

With a shout, the other Arabs followed.

The Swiss, Talata, also found himself carried along in that mad rush. The camels needed no urging. The long line of beasts, the bedsteads strapped to their backs, lurched forward with an instinctive sense of the danger threatening them.

The droning note in the distance was now pitched in a higher key. To Talata it sounded like a distant factory whistle.

"It's getting nearer," he shouted, above the jolting of his camel and its paraphernalia.

But the hunchback did not answer. He continued to urge his racing camel a little ahead of the whole caravan. All blindly followed him.

NOW a new phenomenon began. Talata heard a sharp *phut* under his camel's feet, like the falling of a spent bullet. So realistic was the impression that he drew his revolver from a holster and glanced wildly round. The *phut—phut* continued. A faint breeze stirred against his cheek.

A crash and a jangle behind him. One of the camels carrying a bedstead had stumbled and fallen. Another, immediately behind, staggered over the fallen beast and also came to the ground. Lacquered steel and mangy bodies were inextricably mixed. A dull red began to stain the sands. One of the beasts had broken a leg.

Half the caravan had stopped at this catastrophe. While several Arabs were still galloping ahead, the hunchback swung round, raced his camel to the fallen beasts, and dropped from his saddle. To the astonishment of Josef Talata, who was watching the scene, the hunchback fumbled in his ragged *kuftan* and produced a revolver. Two loud reports, and the camels sagged to the sand. A moment later, and the hunchback, again in his saddle, was racing past.

"But the bedsteads!" pleaded Talata, galloping his camel in vain pursuit.

"Follow me, master!" cried the hunchback.

The fellow seemed to be stampeding the caravan in a queer direction. Some of the Arabs who had galloped ahead had halted, irresolute. The hunchback was yelling and pointing in a more northerly direction. He seemed so sure of himself that the Arabs wheeled their camels and followed him.

And now the singing sands were strumming a fiercer note. It sounded in the eardrums like a wetted finger drawn across a pane of glass. A shrill note—the screaming of a thousand jinn. Pellets of sand began to sting the jovial cheeks of the Swiss.

Talata bent his head and urged his camel to further efforts. But the storm was gaining upon them. Or rather, they seemed to be riding toward it—or was it merely his excited imagination? A moment later he drew in his camel, for the hunchback had stopped and turned about. Arabs shrouded in their hoods, gathered round him.

"The caravan delays us," yelled the hunchback. "These cursed iron beds! Cut them away and free the camels!"

"No—no, damn you!" cried Talata. "The bedsteads must stay on the camels."

"Then we die for the sake of these beds, eh?" yelled the hunchback. "By Allah, not if I know it! Listen to that storm!"

Beneath the high-pitched whine there now sounded a rumble like a thousand drums. Even the dark faces of the Arabs paled.

"Is it not enough, brothers?" asked the hunchback.

"Aheel It is enough," came the roar from their throats.

"Then away with these trappings," cried the hunchback, leaping from his saddle, and his hand reaching out for his knife.

"Stop, you devil with a hump!" snarled Talata. "If you touch those bedsteads, you die."

Swarthy faces turned toward the white man. He held a revolver in his hand and leveled it at the hunchback. Talata had slipped from his saddle and straddled triumphantly in the sand.

"But the storm, master!" pleaded the hunchback "It will suffocate us."

"Then we suffocate—with the bedsteads," said Talata.

AT the same moment he fired—but too late. Even as he had spoken, the hunchback had sprawled forward, grasped one of those straddling legs, and brought the Swiss rolling to the ground. One twist of the wrist; and with a yell of pain, the white man had dropped the revolver. With a grin on his face, the hunchback slipped it within the folds of his *kuftan*. Then he left the Swiss and raced toward the convoy of camels, a knife in his hand.

Other Arabs helped him. The black-lacquered bedsteads clanged and fell with a thud in the sand. Released from their burdens, the camels shook themselves, and began to trot away from the storm. In a few minutes they were all free. The desert was strewn with the wreckage of sixty bedsteads.

"Now race for your lives!" yelled the hunchback.

A wall of sand seemed to be rushing toward them. The sky had been blotted out. Pellets of sand whirled all about them. The sound was like the twanging of mighty harps accompanied by those thudding drums.

Josef Talata gazed at that miserable heap of black-lacquered bedsteads in the yellow sand. Disaster! The end of a desperate adventure. And then a hand caught the reins of his camel and tugged at them. It was the hunchback.

"Save yourself!" he yelled. "The devils are upon us."

The two camels lurched forward. Side by side the hunchback and the Swiss raced away from that swift-traveling wall of sand. But a moment later the storm was upon them. Talata followed the example of the hunchback and bowed his head. Even so, he felt like a man drowning under water. There was a roaring in his ears, and his vision was blotted out. Sand choked his nostrils, filled his throat, and he struggled against the awful fear of suffocation. One hand clutched the scraggy back of his camel. The beast was bowed, and staggered along helplessly beneath the crushing weight of traveling sand.

Talata felt his senses leaving him. He was like a live man being stamped ruthlessly into a grave of sand. The jinn of the desert were grinning at him! All their faces were crooked, like that of the hunchback. But he was dying, slowly. He was blind. The roaring had become a medley of steel hammers thudding away. He gasped vainly for breath. The next moment he pitched forward in his saddle and would have fallen, but a strong brown hand gripped him. The hunchback, bowed beneath the sandstorm, held on to the drowning man. The hunchback's mind was filled with music—mad music.

"Tchaikovsky in his most ridiculous and bombastic mood," he thought.

And there was a suspicion of a grin on the face of Rodgers, the Red Wolf of Arabia. . . .

Two hours later the desert was silent again. A clear evening sky with the stars glittering overhead. A waste of sand frozen into queer shapes. A group of Arabs gathering their camels together while the Swiss, helped by the hunchback, struggled back to consciousness.

"The bedsteads?" he gasped.

The hunchback pointed to those waves of sand, immobile once more.

"Lost," he murmured. "Lost in that waste of sand."

Josef Talata realized it was the end.

"And what now?" he asked.

"We ride back to Hodeidah," said the hunchback quietly. "You have no beds for the Sheik Mubarak, and I have no message. All is lost in the Desert of the Singing Sands."

Talata regarded the crooked man thoughtfully.

"BUT why all this excitement over sixty cheap and nasty beds?"

It was Adrian Selworthy who asked the question of the red-haired man in evening dress who strummed idly at the piano in the crazy house in Hodeidah.

"Very necessary," murmured Rodgers. "I must ask you to put an embargo on all such beds entering Arabia through this port."

"But why? Am I to deny the poor Arab a bed to rest his body?"

"Of that type of bed—yes," replied Rodgers. "It took me a long time to discover why the Sheik Mubarak was so anxious to have sixty of them, and why Josef Talata was willing to convey them through the desert. Cheap and nasty they are, my dear fellow. But they're all steel tubes. Framework and everything. And those steel tubes were disguised gun-barrels. Our jovial friend Talata was a gun-runner, disguising his wares as bedsteads. And you were helping him! Once that valuable consignment had reached Sana, the Sheik would easily have transformed the tubes into rifles. He had the stocks of old rifles ready to fit the new tubes. There would have followed an unpleasant revolt."

"Thank heaven the bedsteads never reached Sana!" murmured Selworthy.

Rodgers grinned.

"For one moment," he said, "I thought I was going to miss that storm in the Desert of the Singing Sands. I really don't know what I would have done if the caravan hadn't followed me and ridden right into it. Luck, again."

Selworthy took one of the hands that was fingering the keys of the piano.

"Thanks!" he said quietly.

But Rodgers seemed wrapped in his own thoughts.

"What a subject for a modern composer in that desert storm," he murmured. "I would begin it *pianissimo*—"

His fingers strummed lightly. One monotonous note sounded.

Selworthy groaned, and left the room.

The Strange

A remarkable case of that post-war Bureau of Missing Persons called Quest, Inc.

by Gordon Keyne

"Anyhow, I never seen this fellow," said the veteran.

STEVE LURING, president of Quest, Incorporated, was for once unhurried. He chewed at a dead cigar and fingered a number of letters, reports and photographs outspread on his desk.

"You're one of our star field agents, Horton," he observed, "so I don't hesitate to assign you to a case that's apparently impossible."

Horton, who sat facing him, smiled slightly. He was a lean, brown, quiet-eyed man, looking relaxed and restful. His features, despite their strong carving, held a certain look of pleasant sympathy, of understanding; they were kind features, but could be harsh as the very devil at need. He said:

"Most of the cases that come to Quest these days seem impossible. Right after the war, it was different, but the past three years have weeded out the easy ones."

Luring nodded; this was true.

The end of World War II, with the populations of the whole earth topsy-turvy due to war, pestilence and famine, not to mention mass deportations and racial furies, had seen the birth of Quest, Incorporated. Its work had been, quite simply, the location of lost persons, whether alive or dead. Even when a man had been fusilladed and tossed into a ditch with a thousand others, there was at that time still some chance of verifying his demise.

The ensuing three years and more had changed things. Innumerable disappearances of those war days still remained to be cleared up, of course. Quest, Inc., was retained in many a case dating back to Nazi barbarism or Japanese savagery, but the lapse of time had blurred events and made such cases highly difficult. Quest, meanwhile, had developed into a world-wide organization of vast influence, and never hesitated to take on the most unpromising cases that offered.

Luring handed a photograph across the desk, with a curt: "Know this guy?"

Horton took it and nodded. It was the picture of a singularly young and handsome man in Air Force uniform. Luring passed over a second photograph, without comment. It showed the same young man, now a colonel; the face was deeply lined. A sensitive face, infinitely older than in the first picture.

"Clewes," said Horton. "I flew in his squadron for a time, in Italy. Then he was transferred to an English base. I never knew him well—only very slightly. He shunned friendship and publicity alike. Whatever became of him?"

Luring smiled thinly. "Your question reflects the common ignorance. It's not generally known that, three months after peace came, Patterson Clewes disappeared—and has never been heard from since."

Horton was genuinely shocked. "Why, I took for granted he was back in the movies!"

Luring nodded briefly.

"So did everyone, apparently. Peace gave the world so much to do that it overlooked such minor details. I suppose you know his background; it's all briefed here."

Horton did. Pat Clewes (I have called him that in this record, though of course that is not the real name), a prominent young movie actor and amateur airman, had come of a wealthy family; he had enlisted in the air service and had achieved promotion steadily; at the war's end he was given a staff position. He had served in all the war theaters and his squadron was famed as one of the deadliest in the service.

"Hollywood has squandered a fortune in the search for him, but vainly," Luring went on. "His family, also. Now that his father, Patterson Clewes, Sr., has become a director of Quest, we've taken up the job. Here are the various reports for you; I don't think you'll learn much, at least from them. It's thought he was killed somewhere."

"WHAT'S his father's notion?" Horton asked shrewdly.

"Well, Clewes and his son never got on," Luring replied. "He's a tough bird; the son was the opposite. The mother's dead. Clewes thinks, without any evidence, that the boy disappeared voluntarily. That doesn't make sense. The boy had everything in life to come back to. Probably he was knocked on the head in some obscure place, during the crime wave and social disturbances that followed the war, like hundreds of others."

Fate *of* Colonel Clewes

Horton nodded again, politely, not from conviction. That had been a pretty tough period after the armies were disbanded; but no one who had known Pat Clewes would believe that he could perish obscurely, without reverberations sounding afar.

"All right, I'll tackle it," Horton said, gathering up the papers.

"Unofficially, I understand there's a fat reward offered by his old studio—don't know which one it is," said Luring. "You might do well for yourself."

"I need it," Horton replied, smiling. "Got another youngster coming next month, you know. Well, you'll hear from me."

The papers in his brief-case, Horton repaired to the field-agents' desk room in the headquarters building and settled down to peruse the various reports by previous searchers for Pat Clewes. He was fascinated by the portraits—this blond, eagle-orbed, yet sensitive face was remarkably handsome, holding both great strength and an indefinable gentleness such as the strongest of features sometimes reveal.

The searchers had actually turned up almost nothing. Clewes, whose life was singularly free of women, had rejoined his family upon being discharged; he was in good health, but moody and irascible. After three months at home, during which time he built up a considerable reputation for irritability and bad temper, he was prevailed upon to take up his moving-picture career anew. He started for Hollywood, driving cross-country in his car, a distinctive black Mercedes that had formerly belonged to a Nazi tycoon.

A postcard from St. Louis was the last communication received by his family; it was cheerful and friendly—an important fact, because he did not get along particularly well with either his father or his brother. His mother was long dead. Some months later his car was picked up in New Orleans with some stolen vehicles, and how it got there could not be established.

Only one point, which led nowhere, had been unearthed: At St. Louis a former service man had been discovered; Clewes had picked him up somewhere in Indiana and given him a ride to St. Louis, his home. There had been another "rider," on whom the report of the service man read, as quoted:

"He was a nut of some kind—all whiskers and screwy talk and rags. I heard Clewes address him a couple of times as Bishop, but don't know who he was. They talked a lot about Jerusalem and seemed quite chummy. I got off downtown. I think Clewes was going to some hotel."

Careful investigation had proven that Clewes had not registered at any St. Louis hotel. Since he followed

He saw his man advancing to meet him.

the dangerous custom of picking up riders, it was not impossible that some thumber had knocked him on the head and made off with the Mercedes. It was also possible, though less probable, that he had abandoned the car and disappeared voluntarily.

Horton did some investigating along religious lines. "Bishop" might have been the name of the ragged stranger. Being a religious title of some distinction, it could scarcely apply to such a person. However, he found that it was actually the lowest title among certain sects, particularly "mushroom religions" and radical cults, who adopted it to lend the wearer distinction. This led him on to learn that the title could be bought quite legally by any who desired it, for an average of forty dollars, from one of several ordination mills that operated under State charters.

"So the guy might have been a bishop, at that," Horton reflected in some surprise. "Check it for what it's worth, and leave it. What next? Looks as though St. Louis had been the jumping-off place for Colonel Pat Clewes. And just because others have investigated the hotel registers, that's no sign they've combed the pasture clean—so get to work."

HE caught the morning Air Special to St. Louis, arriving in time for luncheon, and settled down to the elementary work required of all field agents for Quest, Incorporated; that is, regarding the efforts of prior investigators with the eye of suspicion. He could assume that the chief hotels had all been covered. With the hairy stranger along, Clewes would scarcely have invaded one of the hotels appropriate to his own position and wealth. So Horton looked up the trans-city route usually taken by westbound drivers. Following this route himself with a rented car, he began a careful check of motor courts and lesser hostelries.

This was slow work, since Horton was methodical and neglected nothing. Three days produced no result. On the fourth afternoon, at a highway motor court on the western edge of town, he made the strike. Clewes had occupied one of the cottages here, with a companion, on the same day he had sent that postcard to his family. Both of them had registered, the companion signing himself as Bishop John Foster Wells of Jerusalem—no State given. This answered a number of questions.

Between then and now, the motor court had twice changed hands, and there was no possibility of talking with anyone who might remember the ill-assorted patrons. Therefore Horton went to work on the only possible remaining angle—that of the name Jerusalem, overhead by the service man.

With a Postal Guide and a long-distance phone, he eliminated as possibilities all of this name except a New Jerusalem in southwestern Iowa. He discovered this to be some kind of a religious community, or rather it had been at one time. It was off the highway and so truly rural as to have not even a telephone.

Following his hunch, he located the nearest town that had a police department, got hold of the chief, identified himself, and asked for information. Had a Bishop Wells ever been connected with the New Jerusalem community?

"Hell, yes," came the immediate response. "The place has quit being religious, but a lot of the old feeling still remains, and there's a Bishop Wells there now. I dunno his first name, but I can find out."

"No, don't bother," replied Horton, elated. "Thanks a lot!"

So, thus easily, he had triumphed where others had failed; and next morning he started out in his rented car for the place called New Jerusalem, feeling well pleased with himself, as well he might.

That afternoon he ran into heavy rain, which slowed him up a trifle, and next day when he got off the highway the rain still continued, and the mud roads were a curse. He came that afternoon to his destination.

THERE was nothing here except a big coöperative store and storehouse, with a garage and a church and a school.

The post-office was located in the store, and he went here for information both general and particular. He found a garrulous disabled veteran in charge, and was soon soaking in knowledge.

Long before the war, he learned, an obscure religious sect had taken over the district, but their organization had broken up. The war had just about finished them, since they were conscientious objectors. Following the war, however, the loose ends had been knit together and the community of scattered farmers was now in excellent shape.

Bishop Wells? Yes, he was the leading influence around here now. He had taken over the old Johnson place three years ago—had married the Johnson girl, after sickness had taken off the old folks. Might be at home, might be gone; he was usually visiting around, helping with the farm work or doctoring or nursing. The Bishop did about everything, it seemed. Could sure preach hellfire, too!

The co-op was going strong, thanks to the Bishop; he had a nose for business, said the veteran, with open admiration. Nothing he could not turn his hand to—doctoring and nursing, building, anything you'd want to name. Funny thing about the Bishop, too: In the old days he had been no-account and a heavy drinker. He went away for a spell, then came back cured, and had taken hold like a good one.

Horton was not interested in the Bishop, primarily. He produced the portrait of Colonel Pat Clewes—the deeply lined, almost haggard postwar face.

"Tell me if you ever saw this man," he said. "A friend of mine who disappeared after the war. I think Bishop Wells may know something about him."

"Nope. Colonel, I see. A private first-class like me wouldn't know colonels," said the veteran. "Anyhow, I never seen this fellow. And if you look up the Bishop, don't mention what I said about his past. He's right remorseful about it."

He had no trouble finding the simple marker.

"I could cheerfully kill you, Horton," said the Bishop.

Horton promised this. He got directions to the Johnson farm, and set forth again.

After an hour's drive he came to the place. The pleasant little farmhouse, well painted and kept up, lay amid a group of pines and maples on a knoll, with a large barn behind it and flocks of white Leghorns about the barnyard. A sturdy, smiling woman in her twenties was feeding the chickens when he drove up.

"Good afternoon," he said. "Is the Bishop around?"

"No, he's gone over to the Jaquith place. Ma Jaquith is right sick," she replied.

Horton gave his name, stated his errand quite frankly, found he was speaking with Mrs. Wells, and was impressed with her friendly, capable air. She asked him into the house and gave him a foaming glass of new milk, and he tried the effect of the photograph on her, without result.

"John—that's my husband, the Bishop—might know him, but I don't," she replied. "No such man has ever been around here, to my knowledge. Oh, I see he was an Army man."

"Yes, a colonel," said Horton. "But he would not have been in uniform."

"Maybe he's the unknown veteran," she suggested. "The one buried in the cemetery back of the church, at New Jerusalem."

"Is one buried there? Where did he come from?"

"Well, I don't know much about it," she told him. "That was just after the war, at the time my husband came home—he had not been in the war, but had been away. He came back here and settled down, and next year we were married. He lived for a while in the store at New Jerusalem; it was a pretty poor sort of place then," she added, smiling. "I remember hearing that this veteran died there. Dr. Potts was here then. He's living at Riverton now—that's a town on the highway, about thirty miles west."

"You know the veteran's name?"

SHE shook her head. "Nobody knew it, I guess. There's a headstone on the grave. An Unknown Veteran that's how it's marked. If anybody knew, I guess Dr. Potts would; but then, the grave would have been marked, wouldn't it?"

Horton found that Riverton could easily be gained before nightfall; it had no hotel, but being on the highway it did have a motor-court. He promptly decided to pass up the Bishop and go after Dr. Potts, and accordingly took his departure.

"I may be back—no telling," he said, thanking Mrs. Wells for her kindness, and drove off.

He was very far from suspecting that this pleasant, clear-eyed young woman might have any connection with the fate of Colonel Pat Clewes. The latter, when he disappeared, had been well provided with money, and his identity would certainly have been in no doubt whatever.

"Conceivably," he reflected, "things might look rather dark for our worthy Bishop. Suppose he and Clewes reached New Jerusalem, which at that time must have been far more of a hole in the wall than it now is. Suppose Clewes was quietly put out of the way and his identity concealed, while the Bishop took his money and went on to fame, matrimony and fortune? It's more than possible; indeed, it looks quite probable, unpleasantly so."

He found the prospect disagreeable, as his car bounced on toward the highway. Another of these routine jobs, he told himself, where a long-buried

"You see? Clewes acted on impulse. He had been letting his beard grow."

body must be dug up and identified, with the police and publicity dragged in, and a hitherto unsuspected criminal laid by the heels. The possibility that pleasant Mrs. Wells, in talking so freely, might have ruined her own life and be sending her husband to the gallows, irked him. He detested this sort of a job, detested it with all his heart, but now he would have to see it through.

He reached Riverton, a little town of some size, before dark, and put up at the motor-court, getting supper at a restaurant near by. The residence of Dr. Potts was not far away; Horton reached it just after the Doctor had finished his supper, and Potts took him into the consultation-room. A man of forty or less, Potts was genial, precise, and businesslike.

"I remember the case quite well," he said, after hearing Horton's approach. "I was just out of Army service and was trying to get established in these parts. The man died of double pneumonia. He was living in an old shack of a place with the so-called Bishop, at the end of nowhere."

He took the photograph Horton gave him, and eyed it, with a shake of the head.

"I can't say. The man was dying when I reached him; he was unable to talk. He might have been the original of this photograph; impossible to say. A dying man looks nothing like a picture of himself in uniform, remember. This was a clean-shaven man of indeterminate age, no particular marks of identity, and his clothing afforded no name. I made out the death-certificate and even contributed a small sum toward his burial expenses, since he was a veteran."

"How do you know he was a veteran?" demanded Horton.

The other smiled.

"Well, the Bishop said so. He said this fellow had wandered in sick, claimed to be a discharged air-force veteran, and had only given the name of Pat."

PAT! But if he had died from penumonia, there might have been no foul play—except to appropriate his money and effects, and conceal his identity.

"Do you remember seeing a car around?"

"No. I'm positive there was none."

Horton said thoughtfully: "Give me your opinion of Wells."

"He was all whiskers." The Doctor chuckled. "Still, he seemed a charitable fellow. That queer religious sect used to be something of a scandal in these parts—different from other sects, religious objectors, and so on. Most of them had scattered by that time; the war broke 'em up and left 'em broke. I remember this Bishop showed me papers to prove who he was. Looked to me like he was half cracked but harmless. I understand he has taken hold since then and built up the community. I hear a lot of good about him, even if he does do some doctoring that's illegal. In fact, I've heard so much that's downright good about him, that I'm impressed. A Christian character, by all accounts, full of charity and good works."

"Would you suspect anything irregular in this death—of the veteran, I mean?"

"Absolutely not," Potts said positively. "A clear case of pneumonia."

"And no discharge papers?"

"Nothing. The Bishop and I went through his clothes together."

The description of Colonel Pat Clewes mentioned certain marks of identification, though none of them were prominent.

Potts read the description and shook his head.

"I wouldn't have noticed moles and such, Mr. Horton. About the teeth, I can't say. Certainly I wouldn't have checked fillings and so forth; these marks here described aren't by any means noteworthy. Why don't you see the Bishop? He might tell you more."

"I shall," Horton rejoined. "To be honest, I'm not too sure about him."

"Well, mighty few would agree with you. I've met him a time or two, since then, and I think he's all right. A fanatic, of course, and the whiskers give him an older look than is justified—he's prematurely gray, I imagine. Why, six months later, he looked me up and insisted on paying me for my services to the dying man!"

Horton could elicit nothing more, and took his leave. He made careful notes of the conversation while it was fresh in mind—he always did this—and concluded that things still looked dark for the good Bishop. He did not at all doubt that Wells might be an uplifting and charitable force in his community. The question was—had Wells concealed the identity of that unknown veteran, robbing him after death of name and money both? That the body of Colonel Pat Clewes lay in that unnamed grave, now looked very probable.

NEXT day, Horton drove back to the Johnson farm, arriving well before noon. Even before getting out of the car, he saw his man advancing to meet him—a brawny figure in overalls, with gaunt features like John Brown of Ossawatomie, clouded by a great grizzled beard, once brown but now mostly gray. Beetling brows roofed a piercing, uncompromising gaze behind steel-rimmed spectacles. It was a face of power, of craggy purpose.

"Yes, I'm the Bishop. Welcome, Mr. Horton," he said, folding the visitor's hand in a gnarled, massive grip, like a grip of rough oak. Horton actually glanced down to see if those horny fingers were real. They were. "My wife told me about your call yesterday and I figured you'd be back. Come into the house."

Horton followed him inside, met Mrs. Wells and exchanged smiling greetings with her, and followed his host into the parlor—a comfortable room, with a huge Bible on the center table. Upon one wall hung the framed diploma of John Foster Wells, attesting his appointment as bishop by certain founders of his obscure sect, a sect quite unknown to fame, such as may be found in odd corners of the country anywhere. Horton went to it, looked at it, saw that it was dated two years before the beginning of the war.

Wells closed the door and eased himself into a chair.

"Sit down, Mr. Horton," he said. "Now, what can I do for you?"

"Tell me the truth about Colonel Clewes," said Horton bluntly.

"Suppose you let me see that photograph you showed my wife."

Horton complied.

The Bishop gave it a brief glance and returned it.

"That's the man. I never did know his name."

"Oh! The man who was buried as as unknown veteran?"

Wells lifted shaggy brows in surprise. "No, of course not. The man who gave me a lift in his car. I'd better go back to the beginning."

Horton was somewhat surprised. The man spoke with a quiet, cultured voice, and showed no indication of religious "patter." Closing his eyes as though in recollection, Wells continued easily and fluently:

"I was beating my way west. I had been a disgraceful rascal, and had managed to pull myself together; I was coming back here to make an effort to redeem the past. I thumbed a ride from this man, who was bound to California. Later he took aboard a discharged soldier as well. I remember he put me up for the night at a motel in St. Louis—I had almost no money. He was interested in things I told him. He did not talk much about himself—said he had been in the Army, that was all. When we came to a point on the highway closest to New Jerusalem, he let me out. That's all I know about him, but it was this man in the photograph, except that he was not in uniform."

The speaker opened his eyes and looked calmly at Horton, who nodded. All this checked perfectly, and he said as much.

"But," he added, "I'd like to know more about the veteran whom Dr. Potts attended. Was he a young man, Bishop?"

"I don't think so," said the other. "I'd say, around forty, and pretty much of a bum, same as I had once been. I never knew his name, I thought he said once to call him Pat, but I was not sure. He was sick when he came, and broke. Also hungry."

Horton was not above setting a trap to catch a bishop.

"Dr. Potts said, I think, that he was a bearded wreck of a man."

"Bearded? Oh, no! He was clean shaven—had a bit of a stubble, maybe, but not any beard. I have a beard for religious reasons; never shaved in my life, in fact." Wells pawed his luxuriant growth with a horny hand. Horton eyed the hand and fingers with some interest. They had seen plenty of hard work, but were not those of an elderly man at all.

"Was this man buried in a coffin?"

"No such luxury," said Wells. "No; we put him in a pine box that was out back of the store, made over from an old piano box. It was all we had, you see."

"May have to come back to him again," said Horton. "But about Colonel Clewes, the man who gave you a lift in his car: Did he say anything that you can recall about being dissatisfied with his own existence—anything which would indicate that he might want to disappear?"

THE Bishop started slightly. Horton sensed, for the first time, a sudden wariness in his intent gaze, as though fearing some trap.

"Why, yes, I think he did say something about wishing he were dead," he said slowly.

"Did he assign any reason?"

"Let's see, now." Wells closed his eyes again. "Hm! Something about being accursed. About getting out of the Army and finding himself finished, worse off than the average man who could hope for everything from the future. I didn't pay much attention. He said there was too much blood on his hands ever to be washed off—and his own worst enemies were in his own family. That's all I can think of."

Horton nodded, but inwardly he was not satisfied. There was something wrong, he could not say what. Clewes would not have talked in that way to this chance acquaintance, a bum picked up on the road; or would he? He must have done so, if Wells were not lying.

Now Wells, looking at him intently again, asked a question.

"Had that young man, for he was young, broken the law? Are you a detective?"

Horton smiled. "Not in the least. He disappeared about that time, and I'm looking up the facts for my company, who makes a business of finding lost persons. His father is extremely anxious to find him, or to establish his death."

"His father? The old moneybags!" snapped Wells abruptly. "Excuse me. That was how he himself alluded to his parent, I recall. Apparently they had nothing in common."

Horton decided that the Bishop seemed to recall a good deal of Clewes' conversation; perhaps more would develop. As they were talking, they had heard a car drive up outside. Now came a knock at the door, and Mrs. Wells entered.

"John, the Jaquith boy is here. He says his mother has taken a turn for the worse and wants to know if you'll come over. He'll drive you over and back."

"Yes, at once." The Bishop rose. "Well, Mr. Horton, can I do anything else for you?"

"Tell me the truth," said Horton, looking him in the eye. "I'll want to run over to New Jerusalem and look at the grave there. My report may cause the body to be exhumed and examined, you know."

He was instantly aware that the words had an effect. He had anticipated that the implications would rouse the Bishop to anger; but to his surprise the man showed a touch of something very like fear, for one flashing instant. Then Wells nodded.

"As you like. There's no place to accommodate you around here—why not take our spare room? We often use it to put up folks. —Susan, you can take care of Mr. Horton?"

"Of course," assented his wife, with her cheerful smile. "No trouble at all."

"It's kind of you," said Horton. "I'll be glad to pay for the accommodation, of course. I'll drive over to New Jerusalem now, and come back later."

"And," said the Bishop, "when I return from this sick call, I'll talk with you again, though I don't know what else there is to tell you."

Score one lie for the gentleman, thought Horton to himself. His chance shot had gone home. Wells knew something.

THE Bishop left with a boy in an old car. Horton got off in his own car and drove to New Jerusalem. The graveyard behind the church was a primitive sort of place, eloquent of poverty. He had no trouble finding the grave he sought; it bore a simple stone marker inscribed "*An Unknown Veteran*"—nothing else. Horton photographed it and its surroundings, for his report, then went over to the store and passed the time of day with the veteran who kept the post-office.

The latter descanted admiringly on the subject of Bishop Wells, bearing out the Doctor's statement that the Bishop was highly venerated in these parts. Horton listened to various stories of the prelate's devotion to his flock, of his charity and good works, of his readiness to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. And once, said the veteran, the Bishop had handled a couple of drunken truck-drivers in a way to do your heart good; knocked them galley-west, in fact.

Horton came away thoughtfully, and drove back toward the farmhouse in a brown study. He quite believed all he had heard; he could see where Bishop Wells was a grave, kindly, intelligent power for good, and probably most unselfish to boot. And yet he had the conviction that Wells had lied about this unknown veteran.

There might have been no overt wrongdoing; he inclined to this theory. Clewes might have died an entirely natural death. Wells might have done away with all indications of his identity, tempted beyond resistance by the money to hand—not for himself, but for his work here. Such a problem would be a nice one to resolve, as to right or wrong, and Horton felt himself unequal to it.

Then, with a jerk, he remembered something. He stopped the car; his thoughts went back to the war veteran in the post-office cubbyhole. He remembered something which, previously, had gone unnoted; rather, it jumped now from his subconscious mind and he saw it, really saw it, for the first time. Abruptly, he started the car, backed and turned it, and drove back to New Jerusalem.

"Hello!" said the veteran. "You back again?"

"Yes. I need some stamps and was so interested listening to you that I forgot about them," said Horton, laughing. He stood before the window and bought his stamps. The post-office stock was kept flat in an empty account-book, which in turn reposed in an old case of scuffed leather, once handsome, which lay behind the grille.

"That's an old writing-case, isn't it?" said Horton.

The veteran laughed.

"I dunno just what it was, but it's got a lock on it and I can lock away the stamps if I'm not around. I found it here in the building when I opened up this post-office; it was laying in the trash-bin, in fact."

"It's exactly the thing I've been looking for to keep my sales records in!" exclaimed Horton. "Look here—I'll give you ten bucks for it! Then you can get yourself a good safety box for your stamps!"

"Feller, you've bought yourself something. But it aint worth that much."

"It is to me."

Horton pushed a ten-dollar bill across the counter and received the leather case, emptied of stamps.

Again he drove away, and, once out of sight, stopped the car. He wet his finger and rubbed at the two gilt letters faintly visible near the lock of the case. The stamped letters showed up through the layers of dirt and encrusted grime, and his heart leaped. A deep breath escaped him. Then he left the thing as it was, until he stopped his car beneath the big apple-tree outside the house of Bishop Wells.

His bag placed in the spare room, he spent some time in the kitchen with a rag donated by the interested Mrs. Wells. From his labors, the case emerged as a once handsome affair of burnished calf, sadly fallen from its high estate, but with the stamped initials of Patterson Clewes now clearly visible. Horton took it into the parlor and left it lying on the center table beside the big Bible.

For the rest of the afternoon he talked with Mrs. Wells, lent her a hand with her work, or loafed about the place. Supper was on the table and waiting, when at length the Bishop returned. Mrs. Jaquith, he said, had passed away. A neighbor had taken in her four children for the night; tomorrow they would be here for a lengthy stay.

"I'm so glad!" said Mrs. Wells, beaming. "The house would be so much livelier if we had children here all the time!"

A HOUSE with no telephone, no radio, none of the accepted luxuries of modern life! The Bishop, it seemed, would have none of these things. Horton wondered. The man did not seem to him so fanatic, and he brought up the subject at supper.

Wells nodded gravely.

"Life is simple without such things, Mr. Horton, simple and good. We are happy. I have seen so much of what is called higher civilization that I hate all of it and want to put it behind me with the rest."

The meal over—they had lamps, no electricity—the Bishop took up a lamp, nodded to him, and led the way into the parlor.

Horton delayed a moment, purposely. When he came into the room, the Bishop was standing at the center table, examining the writing-case.

"Where did this come from?" he asked.

"I brought it over from the store, where you were living when that unknown veteran showed up. Apparently you had left this in a box of trash," said Horton quietly. "It's very hard to avoid making a mistake of some kind, isn't it?"

The Bishop turned and looked at him for a long moment.

"I could cheerfully kill you, Horton," he said slowly. "I may yet. You would be only one more—"

The silence was heavy and ominous, the very air was tense.

Horton sat down.

"Wouldn't do you any good," he said calmly. "You'd only swing for it a little more speedily. Besides, I'm not calling you to account; I'm not a detective. All I do is make a report. So you killed Patterson Clewes, did you?"

"Yes," said the Bishop in a low voice. "Yes. I killed him."

He went over to the door and closed it, and came back to a chair and almost fell into it. He had become a drooping figure of inertia; he put his

face down in his hands and sat hunched over, silent.

Horton had not expected this confession; it left him bewildered. He had not entertained the least suspicion that Clewes had died otherwise than by pneumonia. He waited patiently until at last the Bishop looked up, stirred, sat gazing dully at him, all the fire gone out of the keen eyes. The man was broken.

"Will you listen to me?" he asked, almost pleadingly.

"That's why I'm here."

"I must tell you about Clewes," said the Bishop, in a lifeless voice. "You're one man who might understand. Clewes had done a lot of bombing and fighting; toward the end of the war, he had a large share in the strafing of the broken German armies. And because of an observer's error, he bombed a motor convoy of women and children being evacuated from a forward area. That really finished Clewes. I suppose he was not thick-skinned enough. He came out of it feeling that he was a killer, a murderer. It haunted him. It rode him day and night. He had witnessed terrible things, had done some terrible things—all in the way of duty. But it broke him."

"I can understand that," said Horton in quiet assent. "An unfortunate state of mind, but some men were like that. However, most of them could get over it."

"Clewes could not." The Bishop sat staring at nothing. "A sense of guilt remained with him. It was overwhelming, to his sensitive spirit. Perhaps he was a psychoneurotic—what used to be called shell-shock—and had no chance to get over it. The average man came back to healing, to a waiting family, to a wife. Clewes had no such chance. He was not married, his mother was dead, his father jeered at him for a softie crackpot—a hard old rascal, that father of his."

The Bishop paused. He had quite given up his lies; he knew a lot about Patterson Clewes. But Horton said nothing. Presently the other resumed, in his mechanical way:

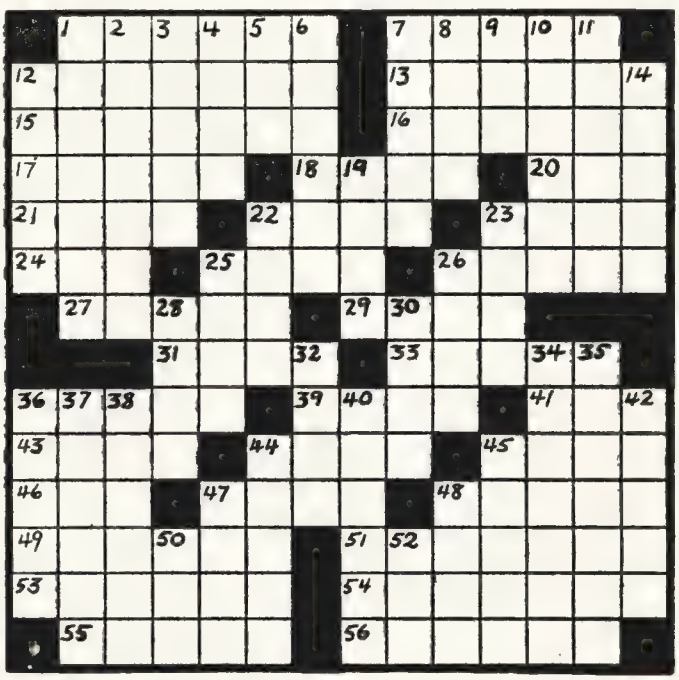
"Clewes came back to wealth, social position, even fame. I expect that was bad for him, too; if he had had to struggle for a living like other men, it might have reduced him to normal. But he wanted to give up everything and strike out in some way for him-

BLUE BOOK'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Edited by Albert H. Morehead

IN this puzzle the definitions combine the true synonym of the word with a clue to the spelling of the word; but the phrasing of synonym and clue is intentionally misleading. The trick of solving is to disregard the apparent meaning and try to figure out which part of the definition is synonym and which part is clue. For example, anagrams: "Pieces of eight" defines *specie*, of which word *pieces* is an anagram. Hidden words spell out the defined word as parts of other words: *Hid each plan*" defines *idea*. The enigma type of definition plays on the syllables in a word: "I put in ad for help" is *aid*, since "I" is put into "ad." Puns, backward spellings, and straight dictionary definitions are also used.

(Solution on page 87)



ACROSS

1 A chaser after drinks, I go out to get water
7 A hidden fund is lush
12 Rescue of a savage, about fifty
13 The U. S. is after a camp at the college
15 Surging drives
16 Pretend to start as an ass and return as an emu
17 Whatever this is, he'd have a word for it
18 Are caught in the act and go on the wagon
20 The apple of his Irish mother's eye
21 Ed was raised with affectations
22 You go in from behind the elm, beast
23 An opening in the five and ten
24 I bring back an alternative to the French king
25 Dogs in boot camp
26 Staff officers with ideas
27 It's furious to be in a raid
29 Boaters lose a bet without these
31 Wane and start out fresh
33 I'd leave the distaff side for the army group
36 An icy glide
39 Newts
41 I'd quit the guild and carry the load
43 W'y quit when you've landed in Italy?
44 I am returning to be with you in our Hawaiian isle
45 Little Caroline is a dear
46 We raise a high ball with the elbow
47 Underworld girl
48 Keep it in gas for good runs
49 A spice from the peaks
51 Wine makes one blah (sic)
53 Is unruffled though teased
54 Rile Eve, for a spell
55 Judicial garments make one sober
56 Bring me to the dean to make an apology

DOWN

1 Fighter hides in war; Rio Rita helps him
2 Regalia is changed in North Africa
3 I've ease in hearing the plants
4 From Kant to Panzer
5 That bloke in the bar is a beggar
6 Secure in salvation
7 Sacré, what a panic!
8 The end has lots of ballast
9 Expressive interjections are the sum of hesitation
10 Dems are about up for a comeback, all lathered
11 Man in the hue of the merciful
12 Rag us (to get a rise) about our sweetie
14 "The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring — confute:"
Omar
19 A lot of voice
22 Ancient Persian neighbor
23 You need a passport endorsement to reach Siva
25 Lie out of the infield to get a good catch
26 Tars in crafts
28 A bit of inducement
30 I sat with white wine from Piedmont
32 We-all should avoid 'ell at last for the common good
34 Alf lied and was thrashed
35 I've come to the turf on the sly
36 Alas, to follow a thousand (gangsters) to the festivals
37 Parolee drops article and becomes a runaway
38 I boil'd with desire
40 Lever-supports help move a carful
42 Sir Edmund —, English poet and critic, 1849-1928
44 Prophet gets circle in a mess
45 I can be in a hut
47 Measure out
48 The League's no use in a storm
50 The ABC of hackwork
52 He led a thousand on the border

self; his father called him a fool and forbade it and they had no end of a row. You see, the fellow wanted to redeem his past, as he saw it. He wanted to make up for the mangling and killing that weighed him down with guilt. He wanted to get away from the movies, from society, from everything he knew, to a new life."

"It's understandable," said Horton. "A psychoanalyst could have helped him."

"I thought you would understand," said the Bishop, looking at him, breaking the futile stare at nothing. "You flew in his squadron, didn't you?"

Horton started.

"How in the devil's name do you know that?" he demanded.

A bitter laugh escaped the Bishop. "Didn't I tell you that I had killed Patterson Clewes? I did." He came to his feet and put out a hand. "Let me have that photograph of him, will you? I'll be back in a moment and will explain everything."

Horton found the photo and handed it over. The Bishop strode out of the room; life and energy had come back, he was himself again.

What did it mean? Horton was still startled, even alarmed. Had Wells really buried Clewes as the unknown veteran—or was the man a trifle cracked mentally? As the minutes passed, he found himself bewildered, confused, unable to get any clear comprehension of this thing.

WHEN the Bishop returned, the picture was in his hand.

He closed the door and resumed his chair; now he was brisk, alert, even smiling.

"You must comprehend one thing," he said: "Clewes started for California, but he never intended going there or returning to his career with the movies. He came here with Bishop Wells, who had been a hopeless scamp but wanted to reform. The Bishop fell ill. The two of them were alone in that half-ruined store—everything was at sixes and sevens. The Bishop died. Few people in these parts knew or remembered him, and Clewes saw his chance and grabbed it. Here. Look at this."

HORTON took the extended picture and looked at it. Sketched in upon the features of Clewes, with skillful hand, were spectacles and bushy brows and cloudy whiskers. A startled ejaculation escaped him, and he looked up at the man before him.

"You!" he said, in utter amazement.

"Right," said the Bishop. "You see? Clewes acted on impulse. He had been letting his beard grow. Now he shaved the dying Bishop, before Dr. Potts arrived, and hid everything connected with his own identity. He took that of Bishop Wells. As time passed, he found that he could get away with the imposture. Gradually, he came to grow into the part. It suited him. It fitted his purposes. Sincerity began to creep into his life. He had found his place in the world. Patterson Clewes was dead—well dead—and buried."

Horton could find no words; he sat silent, but no longer bewildered. This man before him was—or had been—Clewes.

"With Clewes, was buried all his past. In time, Bishop Wells found not only new interest in life and the work of service, but a wife. He has built up his position until it is what you find it. You comprehend now, Horton?"

"Why—yes, yes," said Horton, stirring uncomfortably.

"I'm no longer playing a part; I'm living it," said the other, quite composedly. "It was no trick to turn my beard mostly gray. Besides, I've changed much since that photograph was taken. I wanted nothing out of my old life, and closed it out. There was no one to mourn me. I suppose my family is more interested in settling my estate than in recovering me. Well, that brings us down to the present, Horton, and you."

"Me?" blurted Horton. "Why me?"

The other smiled slightly. "Well, you put me into a bad jam. You suspected that the man in that nameless grave was Patterson Clewes. If you sent in a report of all you had learned here, if the body were exhumed and found not that of Clewes, I'd still be in a jam. I'd be unable to stand such thorough investigation, of course; I might even be suspected of killing Clewes. What beautiful irony! For I did kill him, you know."

"I see," murmured Horton. "Yes. I see."

"So I had to throw myself on your generosity and tell you everything. After all, we flew together in the old days; that's a bond not to be lightly discarded, isn't it? You'll have to make a report, of course. I can't ask you to ignore your own job or to be dishonest. I'm only asking you to look at my position here, my wife, my future, all it means not only to me, but to others."

Bishop Wells folded his hands in his lap and relaxed. He had finished.

"Yes, I'll have to make a report," Horton murmured. "That's definite. I've got a pretty good job, too—"

His voice trailed off. He sat holding the picture, but not seeing it.

He thought of the smiling, pleasant Mrs. Wells, and of Doctor Potts, and of the veteran in the post-office; they all seemed to think a lot of Bishop Wells. He thought of the man before him, the man who had given up so much and who had found so much that was more worth while. He thought, inevitably, of himself.

Himself, and his record with Quest, Incorporated, a record unblemished by any failure. He could see himself walking into Steve Luring's office and facing that hard eye and hard practical brain that admitted no sentiment in business, and confessing that he had failed. He would be dishonest with himself, if he did this.

"You know," he said abruptly, looking up, "I'm glad you said that, about our flying together. It sort of clears things up for me. I'm not staying the night; I'm driving back to town now and—then I'll get on my way East."

"What do you mean?" asked the other, his voice betraying his inner tension.

Horton smiled, and tore the picture in his hand across and across.

"A man can't let down his squadron commander, can he?" His hand went out. "Shake, Bishop. I'm mighty glad to have made your acquaintance. Yes, I've got a good job, a damned good job—won't hurt me a particle to report back nothing doing. A man has to fail once or twice, you know. Glad to have met you, Bishop Wells."

Three Wars with Germany*

The fascinating correspondence between the Director of British Naval Intelligence and the leader of the American forces in the Black Tom case. . . . As our older readers will remember, this most famous of legal battles centered about a message written in "sympathetic" ink by a German sabotage agent across certain pages of a 1917 copy of *Blue Book*—chosen for the purpose, we've always supposed, because many *Blue Book* fiction-writers had declared war on Germany by 1914, and it was therefore about the last periodical likely to be carried by a German sympathizer.

by ADMIRAL SIR REGINALD HALL and AMOS J. PEASLEE
Edited and illustrated by Joseph P. Sims

PART I

THE FIRST OF THE THREE WARS

OUR story—and it is a true one—is built around two principal characters. In the First World War they never met. In the War of the Black Tom case they fought side by side to victory. In the recent war both served their governments actively, and indulged their philosophical pens.

There was a wide gap in their ages, but once their lives had crossed, they were bound by the firmest of friendships. . . .

The Black Tom Case

The Black Tom Case was the most famous international law suit of modern times. It arose out of the destruction on the night of July 29-30, 1916, of the freight terminal of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Company, in lower New York Harbor, opposite the Statue of Liberty, which rocked New York as never before in her history. Thirty-seven carloads of high explosives, several large warehouses filled with sugar and food supplies, a dozen barges and ships, and a railway station and yard were blown to atoms.

Shrapnel shells, touched off in the mighty conflagration, rained for hours upon New York and Jersey City and the surrounding country as though a hostile army were in fact assaulting the nation's metropolis.

Tried with it as a sister case, were the claims respecting the destruction of the Kingsland Assembling Plant at Kingsland, New Jersey, on January 11, 1917, where all of the Russian supplies of the last war were being packed for shipment abroad.

After seventeen years of litigation the Mixed Claims Commission, which had been appointed to arbitrate the claims, handed down a decision in October 1939, holding that Germany had destroyed both properties. The evidence not only proved those two destructions, but showed that Germany claimed to have blown up nineteen other large properties in the United States before we entered the war in April 1917. How many it destroyed later can only be surmised.

From 1916 to 1924 the F. B. I., the New York and Jersey City Police, and a dozen private detective agencies tried to solve the mysteries of Black Tom and Kingsland without success. The Lehigh Valley Railroad Company consulted an eminent lawyer, now dead, who later became a member of the Supreme Court of the United States. He advised them that the chances of success were so remote that it was not worth while even to file a claim before the International Commission.

In the spring of 1924 Edgar H. Boles, then Vice-President of the Lehigh Valley company, R. Warren Barrett, its then General Counsel, and Cedric A. Major, then of its legal staff and now its General Counsel, asked Amos Peaslee if he would care to undertake their hazardous cause. He agreed to do it as a long, long shot. He was soon also retained as chief counsel for the Kingsland claimants.

The trails were then about eight years old, and equally cold. After studying the records of various secret service departments of the United States Government, aided greatly by A. Bruce Bielaski, former head of the F. B. I., Peaslee decided to seek assistance from Scotland Yard. With an introduction to Sir Basil Thomson, formerly head of that famous institution, he went to London. He was shown files which, to his disappointment, contained nothing about Black Tom or Kingsland except clippings from the *New York Times!*

About a year after being employed, during which Peaslee was diligently assembling tangled threads of evidence, he was told of the existence of a vast store of secret German cables and radios in the possession of the British Admiralty.

(Through Mr. Lansing and then Admiral Sims, Mr. Peaslee obtained letters of introduction to Admiral Hall, and went to London in 1925. There the Admiral gave him free access to the amazing records of intercepted enemy messages, and the friendship developed which led to this remarkable correspondence. The first trial of the Black Tom case before the Mixed Claims Commission resulted in defeat for the American claimants, but the case was reopened in 1931.)

[Peaslee to Hall] January 26, 1931

Dear Sir Reginald:

I enclose herewith copies of the Petitions for Rehearing in both the Black Tom and Kingsland claims, and a printed copy of a letter from the clients to the Secretary of State laying down their plan of procedure before Congress.

I am sailing on the *Europa* on January 30th, and expect to go straight to Germany.

Some time during February I shall probably be in England but I do not know just when. . . .

Hilken's Check Stubs and the "Herrmann Message"

Shortly after the adverse Hague decision, Hilken came into Peaslee's office in New York in a very excited frame of mind. He and Herrmann by that time were bent on proving they were not the "liars" which the Commission had branded them to be.

Hilken said, "I have found them."

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"You have found what?" replied Peaslee.

"I have found my check stubs. I have also found my diaries," said Hilken.

He produced check stubs relating to an account in the Corn Exchange Bank of New York, with an entry, unquestionably authentic, dated August 10, 1916, ten days after Black Tom was destroyed, which read "Capt. H., Lewis, etc. $2,000."

"H." was Hinsch. "Lewis" was a well known alias for Fred Herrmann. The "etc." was also significant. Hilken had found the check stubs and other documents in the attic of his old home. An estranged wife who occupied the house had, Hilken claimed, prevented him from locating them earlier.

The diaries were also of tremendous value. They traced a visit of Hilken to Berlin in 1916 and showed interviews with Franz von Papen, and Captain Marguerre of the General Staff, and Nadolny of the Foreign Office, corroborating his prior testimony.

Hilken also turned over still another document which became the most celebrated piece of evidence in the case. It was a secret message which had been written in lemon juice on pages of an old Blue Book Magazine *and which had been developed by heat. It was partly in writing and partly in code numbers. The numbers, by a process of dropping some of them and adding others, indicated pages in the magazine where pin pricks had been made through letters in words selected at random. By substituting those letters for the numbers the entire message could be read as follows:*

[Herrmann to Hilken] Mexico City, April 1917

Have seen Eckhardt. He is suspicious of me. Can't convince him I come from Marguerre and Nadolny. Have told him all reference Hinsch and Deutschland, Jersey City Terminal, Kingsland, Savannah and Tony's Lab. He doubts me on account of my bum German. Confirm to him through your channels all O.K. and my mission here. I have no funds. Eckhardt claims he is short of money. Send ly [by] bearer U. S. 25000. Have you heard from Willie. Have wired Hildegard but no answer. Be careful of her and connections. Where are Hinsch and Carl Ahrendt. Tell Hinsch to come here. I expect to go north but he can locate me thru Eckhardt. I don't trust Carl Ahrendt, Kristoff, Wolfgang and that Hoboken bunch. If cornered they might get us in Dutch with authorities. See that Hinsch brings with him all who might implicate us. Tell him Siegel is with me. Where is Carl D. He worries me. Remember past experience. Has Hinsch seen Wozniak. Tell him to fix that up. If you have any difficulties see Phil Wirth Nat. Arts Club. Tell Hinsch his plan O.K. Am in close touch with major and influential Mexicans. Can obtain old cruiser for 5000 West Coast. What will you do now with America in the war. Are you coming here or going to South America. Advise you drop everything and leave the States. Regards to Hoppenburg. Sei nicht dum mach doch wieder bumm bumm bumm. Most important send funds. Bearer will relate experiences and details. Greetings.

The War Department had intercepted similar messages during the war and was familiar with this German method of communication.

This secret message had been sent by Herrmann from Mexico to Hilken in Baltimore after Herrmann had fled to Mexico at the outbreak of the war. It mentioned by name Michael Kristoff, the incendiary at Black Tom, and Theodore Wozniak, at whose bench the Kingsland fire had been started. If authentic, the document alone proved both cases.

Germany had but one course left, namely, to attack the genuineness of the document. There followed one of the most celebrated battles of expert testimony ever known. The Germans retained Albert Osborn, alleged dean of American experts on questioned documents. The Americans retained Guerrin, the leading British expert, and Heinrichs of San Francisco.

Hall Testifies Again

Peaslee located Hall, who was then on a cruise and who had stopped at Bermuda, and sought an opinion from him, as the greatest of all experts. After radioing him preliminarily on the subject he wrote:

[Peaslee to Hall] March 5, 1932

My dear Sir Reginald:

I have just received your letter of March 2nd, written from the Duchess of Bedford, giving me your plans....

A sketchy summary of the present situation is as follows:

The hopes of the United States Government for a reopening of the Black Tom and Kingsland claims arise primarily from two sets of documents:

The first is a copy of the *Blue Book Magazine* for February, 1917, in which is contained a written message in the handwriting of Frederick L. Herrmann, which was originally written in lemon juice or other invisible fluid. The message contains numbers which refer to certain pages in the magazine, on which there are pin pricks in letters out of which are spelled additional words. The complete message will be found on page 139 of the printed book containing the Oral Arguments at Boston, Massachusetts, July 30—August 1, 1931, enclosed herewith.

This message is authenticated by the affidavit of Herrmann, a copy of which is enclosed; by the affidavit of Paul G. L. Hilken, the person to whom it was addressed, a copy of which is enclosed; and by the affidavit of Raoul Gerdts, by whom the message was carried from Mexico. Gerdts' affidavit is very short. I do not have a copy available, but will send you one.

You will probably have in mind in a general way the part played by Herrmann and Hilken in the evidence previously submitted. Their importance is indicated in the opinion of the Commission written after The Hague argument, a copy of which is enclosed. The Commission, however, did not believe these witnesses for the most part and pronounced them "liars." I agree with the Commission in part that Herrmann and Hilken have frequently lied in their testimony, but I am thoroughly satisfied, from a long series of personal talks with them, that their lying has been as to information which they have withheld rather than regarding facts which they have told. I am particularly satisfied of Herrmann's guilt because of my personal experience with him in Havana, Cuba, when I first met him and when I succeeded in trapping him into certain admissions which were susceptible only of the definite conclusion that he is the right man. Of course, the cablegrams and German admissions are also extremely forceful in showing that he was definitely authorized to destroy factories in the United States and was sent to the United States for that express purpose and with incendiary tubes supplied to him by the German Government.

I am likewise absolutely convinced of the authenticity of this magazine message. Of course, we want your own sincere testimony and I do not want to influence you in your conclusions. I have had a great many talks both with Herrmann and Hilken, however, and as you know

from your own experience, which is far greater than mine, one usually has an intangible conviction one way or the other regarding witnesses which is rarely wrong. There are, furthermore, certain other documents which have not heretofore been emphasized particularly and which I think you might perhaps refer to in your opinion, which are very persuasive in supporting the authenticity of this communication. For example, there are entries in Hilken's diary for the year 1917 showing that immediately after the receipt of this magazine message he went from Baltimore to New London to get Captain Hinsch, brought Hinsch to Baltimore, where Raoul Gerdts then was, and they immediately left by automobile and went to New York and thence to Scranton, Pa., which was Wozniak's home town. This naturally is a most significant piece of evidence, but it has not yet been emphasized. You could readily point this out as one important link in the evidence. Moreover, we have also just within the past few weeks obtained possession of Hilken's old check books, which confirm in a most remarkable manner the complete truth of his testimony respecting payments of cash to German sabotage agents immediately following the destruction of both properties. I will show you the originals of these check books upon your arrival in New York.

This Herrmann magazine message, before being presented to the Commission, had been tested by four experts employed on behalf of the United States and the claimants, to wit: Captain Aloysius McGrail, formerly in charge of the Army's Secret Service in respect to German documents; W. Bourdon Scribner of the United States Bureau of Standards; Jessie E. Miner, an expert on paper; and Elbridge W. Stein, a handwriting expert. All of these experts gave favorable opinions regarding the authenticity of the documents. These are the only four opinions of experts which have so far been filed on behalf of the United States. We are, however, now assembling some further opinions to supplement them. . . .

The other documents whose authenticity is now before the Commission are three letters in the handwriting of Theodore Wozniak, addressed to a man named Baran, which purport to corroborate the fact of Wozniak's presence in Mexico City in the summer of 1917. Translations of these letters will be found on pages 143 and 144 of the enclosed printed copy of the Oral Argument at Boston. The evidence supporting the authenticity of these documents is not, in my judgment, quite as forceful as the evidence supporting the authenticity of the magazine message, though it seems to be sufficient. The Herrmann message contained in the magazine is alone sufficient to win the cases if the Commission concludes that it is authentic.

The Germans at the oral argument at Boston last summer contented themselves with the argument that the cases were closed and could not be reopened. They did not offer any expert evidence at that time regarding the authenticity of the documents. Subsequently, however, Germany employed a large array of experts, whose testimony on the subject of the authenticity of the documents has now been offered by Germany. The expert testimony offered by Germany includes the opinion of Albert S. Osborne, of which a copy is enclosed, and opinions of Messrs. Clark & Skinner, paper experts, and Arthur D. Little, also a paper expert. The Germans have also filed certain evidence as to the date of the watermark in one of the letters.

The expert opinions offered by Germany are, as you will note, of handwriting experts and paper experts regarding certain highly technical aspects of the documents. We have employed some additional technical experts of the same character, who are now engaged in analyzing the opinions of the experts offered by Germany and whose opinions will be filed.

I fear if the Commission has before it simply an array of conflicting highly technical evidence, it is very likely to succumb to the arguments of the German Commissioner and throw us out of court again. Here is where I think you can play a valuable role. If—as I believe—there is an expert science dealing with secret messages and code communications written in wartime, certainly there is no greater expert in the world than yourself! You will be able to express a judgment as to the authenticity of these documents based doubtless on personal experiences which you have had in the past, and also based upon somewhat broader considerations than will be taken into account by the technical handwriting and paper experts who have heretofore been employed. You should not, of course, attempt to usurp the functions of the Commission itself, but I believe that you can steer a middle course between the duties of the Commission and the functions of the other experts and pronounce an opinion from the standpoint of a great expert on German secret communications.

It may well be that after you have studied the original documents you may wish to defer the completion of your opinion until after you have examined in London other similar communications of the same character. McCloy[1] tells me that there are a number of such documents on public exhibition at one of your museums in London, and I doubt not that there are other copies in the Admiralty or other official departments. That is something which we can discuss later. You will have plenty of time to get the opinion into shape. It does not necessarily have to be completed while you are in New York.

I enclose a list of documents which I am sending along with this letter, as well as others which will be sent later. In some cases I have indicated that they are not being enclosed because . . . . we do not have available copies.

With most hearty and sincere regards and many thanks to you for coming to us, I am, as ever,

Sincerely yours,
AMOS J. PEASLEE.

Admiral Hall's expert opinion regarding the Blue Book Magazine *read in part as follows:*

[ADMIRAL HALL'S EXPERT OPINION] March, 1932

I am unreservedly satisfied that the message contained in the *Blue Book Magazine* for January 1917, is genuine and that it was written when it purports to have been written, to wit: early in the year 1917 in an invisible fluid, and developed by heat shortly after. There can be, in my opinion, no reasonable doubt on this subpect.

In reaching this conclusion the experiments of the experts who testified for Germany regarding the characteristics of the paper have confirmed in no small measure my opinion that the message was written in 1917, for their experiments of writing with lemon juice on paper of different ages illustrate a simple fact which I think is reasonably well known. I am quite sure that the original writing in the original message filed with the Commission was placed upon the magazine when the paper was in a green or fresh condition and not after the paper had become seasoned and less subject to the penetrating action of liquids. An examination of the pages of the original message through a microscope shows that the marks on the reverse of each page of writing come from the fluid soaking through the paper. A similar seepage of liquid shows in the experiments of the experts upon similar paper of recent manufacture, but it does not show to the same extent, if at all, when writing is now placed on paper that has already become crisp with age.

[1]Hon. John J. McCloy, now Assistant Secretary of War, then one of the attorneys for the American sabotage claimants.—Ed.

I have taken fully into consideration the underlying theory in the German attack upon this document, namely, that is was concocted by Herrmann and Hilken at a later date. Both the external evidence and the internal evidence seem to me to be far too strong to accept that theory. The context of the message is entirely consistent with other facts known to have existed and with documents which we in the British service (as well as the American authorities) had intercepted. I name but one instance of this consistency, viz. the attitude of Von Eckhardt, the German Minister in Mexico, toward Herrmann as evidenced by Von Eckhardt's cable to Berlin, dated April 12, 1917, in which he asked for information about the man.

One point in the external evidence which in my opinion further confirms the authenticity of the Hilken message is shown by the entries in Hilken's diary at about the date that Gerdts arrived with the message in New York at the end of April 1917. These entries, if carefully studied relative to the hurried trip of Hilken to New London, Baltimore, and to Scranton, seem to me consistent only with the genuineness of the message. . . .

I am told that I must add to this opinion a statement of my experience which might qualify me to express an opinion. I have more hesitation on that subject than I have in expressing my opinion on the principal issue. If there is a science dealing with secret communications sent in wartime, or if the repetition of one experience upon another in several years of duty as chief of the British Naval Intelligence, entitles me to speak, I can only say that I was Director of Naval Intelligence of Great Britain from October 1914 until February 1919. In the course of that experience I had occasion to handle a number of similar messages written by German agents which were intercepted by the British authorities during the war, and as a matter of fact have used myself similar systems of communication. During that time we succeeded in intercepting and deciphering and decoding upwards of 15,000 German secret communications in the form of cablegrams, radiograms, invisible writings, and other code, cipher, or other secret . . . . methods of communication which were intercepted by the British Naval officials or which were referred to our office for especial examination and study.

[Peaslee to Hall] June 1, 1932

Dear Sir Reginald:

. . . The American Agent is completing today the filing of his evidence in the sabotage claims. The selection of Captain von Papen as the new German Chancellor, together with the recent selection of Dr. Albert as Chairman of the Board of the North German Lloyd Steamship Company, following as they do Mr. Nadolny's[1] appearance at the Disarmament Conference, are the prize diplomatic absurdities which we have been expecting and hoping would happen. Such occurrences can always be counted on sooner or later if the "stupid British" and the "idiotic Yankees" bide their time. . . .

"Cowardice, Perjury, and Criminal Recklessness"

[Hall to Peaslee] Hawk's Lease Lyndhurst Hants September 18, 1932

My dear Amos:

I enclose extracts from a letter from Rintelen; there is no doubt but that he is out to show up Papen, whom he has to his face accused of cowardice, perjury, and criminal recklessness; not a bad list of offenses. He goes on to say: "It all will be more or less directly connected with those sabotage cases and the *Friedrich der Grosse.* I wonder whether this time Peaslee and Arnold will abstain from attacking me as they did indirectly through handing the de Haas letter to the M.C.C."

I am convinced of Rintelen's good faith, and I can see his struggles in trying to rehabilitate his daughter with enough to carry on and at the same time keep within the narrow circle of not divulging military secrets. As you saw, he is at times very bitter but I have never known him to tell an untruth.

Lovely weather over here, and we are all bucked up by having so much sunshine.

Forgive a scrappy letter, but I have to be off to meet a train. Our love to you all.

Ever yours,
W. R. Hall

[Peaslee to Hall] November 2, 1932

Dear Sir Reginald:

. . . The Commission held a meeting in Washington yesterday. Dr. Kiesselbach is here. He is reported to have wept copious tears about his inability to come over any more, and the Commission has entered a compromise order giving the American Agent until November 15th to file further evidence and setting down the oral argument for November 21st to 23rd inclusive. . . .

Roberts Declines to Reopen the Cases

The cases were reargued before the Commission with Justice Owen Roberts as Umpire in November 1932 on the basis of Hilken's check stubs, diaries, and the Blue Book Magazine. *Justice Roberts refused to reopen the case. The claimants were unable to account for his refusal until several years later, when—by an extraordinarily courageous and frank statement in open court—Justice Roberts admitted that his judgment in 1932 had been swayed by private correspondence which had been shown to him by the German Commissioner. It was not then part of the record in the case, and the Americans had at that time no opportunity to prove, as they later did, the falseness of statements in the correspondence.*

Uncovering German Fraud

In the spring of 1933 Congress passed a law authorizing the United States to subpoena witnesses and to compel testimony for use before the Mixed Claims Commission. A new petition was filed in the sabotage cases on the only legal ground remaining, namely, that the whole German defense was fraudulent and collusive.

Under the power of subpoena amazing evidence was uncovered. Henry Hilken, the old German Consul at Baltimore, father of Paul Hilken, was required to produce all of his records of the North German Lloyd Steamship Company. They definitely proved the truth of Paul Hilken's confession. They showed hundreds of thousands of dollars of sabotage funds which his son had been disbursing, and they contained specific references to the incendiary "glasses" which Herrmann had been using.

Documents were found showing that Germany had hired a group of witnesses to testify falsely and had made no mention to the Commission of the payments which had been made for the testimony.

In the fall of 1933 Germany insisted on a flat decision from the Commission whether it had power

[1]Nadolny while in the German Foreign Office had initialed the general authorization for sabotage in the cable of January 26, 1915.

to reopen the claims, even if fraud could be established. On that issue Justice Roberts had no doubt and he decided in favor of the United States.

[Peaslee to Hall] March 1, 1934

Dear Sir Reginald:

I think I have not heretofore sent you, and I enclose herewith, a copy of the Umpire's decision of December 15, 1933, in the sabotage claims, holding that the Commission has power yet to render justice if the allegations of fraud, collusion, and suppression of evidence contained in the petition of May 4, 1933, are well founded.

As you know, much has come to light since the Hague decision which makes it apparent that the Commission was seriously misled in reaching the conclusion which it expressed and declared in that opinion respecting the integrity of the German defenses.

The favorable decision of Justice Roberts upon the rights to recover if fraud could be legally proved, suggested again the possibility of a compromise settlement.

Peaslee's efforts in assembling further evidence were interrupted at this time by a call to government service as Chairman of the United States Industrial Appeals Board.

[Peaslee to Hall] October 27, 1934

Dear Sir Reginald:

I am sorry to have been so very tardy in replying to your letter of August 5th. I was inveigled at about that time into accepting a post in the Government as chairman of a newly created Industrial Appeals Board though I am not a member of the party which is in power. The Board hears appeals on final actions of industrial code authorities which have been established throughout industry during the past year. . . . I do not expect to do it very long. In fact, I only agreed to help get the matter started, and had not expected to serve for more than a few months. . . .

We are expecting a decision daily from Justice Roberts on an intermediate motion made by the Germans whereby they are trying to require us to file a bill of particulars or brief respecting our petition for a rehearing in the sabotage claims. I think I told you that Congress at the closing hours of the last session in June put through a resolution tying up all the balance of German funds held here, and there is an amount of about $27,000,000 which will probably ultimately be distributed in some way among American claimants. . . .

The Vienna Records

In the early part of 1935 the Austrian Government announced that its old war records would be made available for study by certain selected authors and professors. Peaslee arranged for an eminent author of Hungary and the professor of history of Vienna University to conduct such studies. They found, among other data, a German General Staff report:

[German General Staff Report] April 27, 1917

United States of America:

According to the latest news, 21 more ammunition factories have been blown up.

The explosion in Kingsland, New Jersey, is reputed to have caused damages of 17 million dollars, while that in the Du Pont Powder factory 2 million dollars.

Still further "surprises" are said to be impending.

The German case was beginning to crumble ominously.

Negotiations with the Nazis

Early in 1936, Peaslee went again to Berlin and spent several months in negotiations with the Nazi government, in co-operation with the American Embassy. The Germans were represented by Goering and Hess. Hitler designated also a high official of the Nazi Party named von Pfeffer as his special representative to deal with the matter.

Peaslee finally succeeded in obtaining an order from Goering to the Foreign Office to request that the trial be suspended and that the United States be invited to send representatives to Germany to arrange a settlement of the sabotage claims.

Secretary Hull sent Mr. Bonynge the American Agent, and Mr. H. H. Martin counsel for the American Agent. The officials met in Munich in the summer of 1936 together with representatives of the claimants including Victor M. Drury, president of Canadian Car & Foundry Co. Ltd. and C. E. Hildum, vice-president of Lehigh Valley Railroad Company. An agreement of settlement was prepared and signed on July 10, 1936, with the approval of Hitler. It provided for the conclusion of the cases by an immediate cash payment of about $20,000,000 out of the German Special Deposit account in the United States Treasury.

Another "Scrap of Paper"

But that did not conclude the famous litigation. Foreign Office Officials opposed the settlement. . . .

The settlement having been renounced by Germany, the trial of the case on the issue of fraud was resumed:

[Peaslee to Hall] October 27, 1937

Dear Sir Reginald:

I have just returned from five days in Washington where we had another hearing respecting the conspiracy of the two expert witnesses. The case continued to go very well for us, and there is every indication that the Commission, or at least the Umpire and the American Commissioner, are convinced that there was conspiracy and that they were badly deceived at the time of the original hearing respecting the authenticity of the Herrmann message in the *Blue Book Magazine*. Mr. Bonynge and Mr. Martin are completely confident that the Commission will reopen the Hamburg decision of 1930 and are advising us very strongly to make no settlement until such action is taken. . . .

It would be great fun to join forces in Austria or Switzerland, but it looks to me as though my nose will be on the grindstone for some time. Anyway, here's hoping! Thanks so much for all that you did for Dorothy.[1]

[Hall to Peaslee] November 6, 1937

My dear Amos:

First of all, what a joy to hear you are well again and as ever full of fight. . . .

I don't suppose you will be able to work up the Germans to agree to the Munich compromise; with the German Foreign Office against it, there would be little chance.

[1]Dorothy W. Peaslee, Mr. Peaslee's daughter, who was attending school at Wycombe Abbey, High Wycombe, England. —Ed.

Anyhow, whilst there is life there is hope, and I belong to the Peaslee-Peto camp, please.

As for the winter; the Dents are taking a flat at Davos for three months; they will be able to put up four extra people; I am going as a p.g. and expect to leave England about January 18th and stay out there till April, by which time my Professor Plesch tells me that my lung ought to be well; so it's worth trying.

I fancy that Faith may be coming home in the spring; Hong Kong prices have gone up so much that she can't afford to live there, and there seems to be a chance that Peter's ship may be sent home in the early summer; so I have to look round for a cottage for her near me if possible.

I have let Hawks Lease for a year with the option of purchase; had to do it as I could not go on with my directorships; was not fair to be so much away, so I resigned this year, which of course means a substantial reduction of income; but Dorothy will have told you how comfortable I am in my doll's house and, really, as one gets older, one can do with very little—as long as one is not worried! . . .

[Hall to Peaslee] April 24, 1938

My dear Amos:

How are you all and what are your plans? Any chance of seeing you over here this summer; I do hope so.

I got back from Wengen at the end of March to meet the coldest of east winds, which have been blowing ever since. . . .

I saw a cutting in one of your papers about the sabotage case which intrigued me; that the Lehigh Valley railway had got a loan of some seven hundred thousand dollars from the Government, and that as security they gave part of what they expect to get from the claim. . . . The extract also said that the latest day for evidence to be put in was May 12th, which if I remember aright was the date you mentioned. . . .

Please give my love to Dorothy and to Dexter; I hope he means to come and sail over here this year; I have a new Dragon class yacht ready; he will know the type; she ought to be ready for launching about the middle of next month.

[Peaslee to Hall] May 4, 1938

Dear Sir Reginald:

I am glad to see your familiar type and signature in your letter which arrived this morning. . . .

Mr. Bonynge completed the filing of American evidence last week, and the Germans have until next Friday to state whether they desire to file any further rebuttal. If not, arrangements are supposed to be made to submit the matter to the Commission upon further briefs and argument.

The negotiations to try to effectuate the settlement have been very active, but have stumbled over one obstacle after another and have come to naught as yet. We are pretty sick and tired of interminable delays but there seems to be nothing to do but to hang on. . . .

William D. Mitchell Enters the Case

Robert W. Bonynge, who had been the American Agent since 1924, was aging in 1938. Hon. William D. Mitchell, former Solicitor General and Attorney General, and one of America's ablest advocates, was invited at Peaslee's suggestion to assist Mr. Bonynge in the oral argument. The State Department consented, but Germany objected. The Commission upheld Germany's objection, since government officials are the only ones customarily permitted to plead in an international case. Secretary Hull, however, promptly appointed Mr. Mitchell to represent the United States officially, and Mr. Mitchell volunteered to act even though obliged to renounce all fees for any services before the Commission.

[Peaslee to Hall] September 26, 1938

Dear Sir Reginald:

. . . I should have sent you earlier a copy of our brief which was filed on September 13th. Mr. Mitchell, the former Attorney General, you will note, has consented to continue, even though he was obliged to renounce all private fee in order to represent the government officially in the case. Mr. Bonynge's health is not as good as we would wish, but he hopes to participate in the argument. It is felt confidently in our circles here that there is nothing left to Germany's defense from the factual standpoint. You will observe some of the new documents located only within the past few months among the files of the elder Mr. Hilken in Baltimore, including notably the Ahrendt postscript[1]. . . .

[Hall to Peaslee] December 18, 1938

My dear Amos:

Many thanks for your letter and the brief. It looks as if you had driven the beast in to a corner at last, and he is now showing his teeth.

I rather gather from what I hear over here that the President has pretty strong feelings on the subject of the Nazis and would rather welcome something which he could use to show up their faithlessness.

Can't you put together from what is documented a series of statements showing where the Germans have lied and broken faith? Take Von Papen for instance; the White Paper published by our Foreign Office—you have a copy I think—put against his sworn affidavit makes a very pretty case; Bernstorff's affidavit, too, put against the intercepted cables proves him a liar. Again, the German sworn statement that no ship was used in American waters for any purpose inimical to the States—on which statement they got half the compensation money—put against Rintelen's statement in his book as to using one of them as a bomb manufactory—thus you could go on for a long time with similar cases; if you could do this and let the Department of Justice, say, have it or let it go direct to the President, you would manufacture from proved materials a bomb equal to the Zimmermann letter; and give the President a weapon which he could—and I believe would—use to the full. It will mean a bit of work, but . . . . the results will justify the trouble. . . .

I don't expect that the hearing on the twentieth will settle anything but if you get this bomb exploded, the next sitting should prove fatal to the Germans.

I write as I feel so forgive me if I am intruding in to a province where I ought to behave like an angel!

The Final Argument

After many delays the case was finally brought on for its last hearing before the Mixed Claims Commis-

[1]This was a postscript on a letter from Carl Ahrendt, one of Hilken's assistants, written to Hilken just after the Kingsland fire reading as follows:

"Yours of the 18th just received and am delighted to learn that the von Hindenburg of Roland Park won another victory.

"Had a note from March [Herrmann], who is still at the McAlpin, asks me to advise his brother that he is still in urgent need of another set of *glasses*. He would like to see his brother as soon as possible on this account."

sion in January 1939. It was argued for two solid weeks in the Supreme Court Building in Washington. There had already been six previous arguments, a total of 70 briefs filed, and over 100,000 pages of evidence. The issue this time was fraud, and no quarter was to be asked or given—no punches pulled.

[PEASLEE TO HALL] January 3, 1939

Dear Sir Reginald:

The argument goes on in earnest and with gloves off on the sixteenth. There is an atmosphere of confidence on our side. I hope it is well founded. We certainly have the proofs, and we ought to win. If this decision should be against us, we would be by no means finished, but it might be a job for our grandchildren.

For the first time the Press appears to be giving us a halfway decent break. It has treated the case heretofore as in the realm of the incredible, but now people are beginning to be willing to believe. . . .

Mike, the elevator man in our building, is bubbling over as a result of your Christmas greetings.

[PEASLEE TO HALL] Washington, D.C., January 19, 1939

Dear Sir Reginald:

The rumors here as to prospects on your side of the water are disturbing. You would have had some satisfaction, however, if you could have listened for the past three days to the argument by former Attorney General Mitchell on behalf of the United States at the impressive sessions of the Mixed Claims Commission now going on in Washington. I am writing you this letter from the Supreme Court Building where the hearing is being conducted and where we have all—both American and German counsel—been assigned headquarters during the hearing.

Not since the day nearly twenty years ago when I stood in the great Hall at Versailles and watched the German delegates march in, midst the representatives of all the Powers, and sign the Versailles Treaty, have I seen a Major Power subjected to such complete humiliation.

Here are a few extracts from the record in this unprecedented instance of the trial before an International Tribunal of a great government upon charges of fraud and collusion in the conduct of litigation. Reading from the Commission's decision of December 15, 1933, Mr. Mitchell quoted a passage as follows, this language being the language of Umpire Roberts:

> "The petition in short avers the Commission has been misled by fraud and collusion on the part of witnesses and suppression of evidence on the part of some of them. The Commission is not *functus officio*. It still sits as a court. To it in that capacity are brought charges that it has been defrauded and misled by perjury, collusion, and suppression.
>
> "No tribunal worthy of its name or of any respect may allow its decision to stand if such allegations are well founded."

Continuing his argument, Mr. Mitchell then said (p. 7):

> "In order to ascertain the true attitude of the defense it seems to me proper to review its attitude here from the start. When this case was begun, the defense was faced with the necessity of outlining the course of its defense. It was an important case, a large amount of money is involved, and in addition to that it involved charges against the former German Government that were to say the least exceedingly embarrassing and if found against it would tend further to discredit the Government of Germany at that time.
>
> "With this important situation before it, some one in authority, not some mere underling, had the task of deciding what course Germany should take; and we think then, and I will go into the details later, that the course that was resolved on at that time was the course of holding back, of admitting nothing, or suppressing everything that went and tended to point to Germany's guilt. I think, on the record as I will show, there is no room for doubt about that."

With these and other introductory remarks, Mr. Mitchell then for three days took up step by step the exposure of the fraud and collusion in the defense, from the original treatment of the famous January 26, 1915, cablegram which you intercepted, through the many affidavits of former German officials now demonstrated to have been collusively assembled, all of the same tenor and all now shown to be false.

It has been done so quietly and with such masterful understatement that the effect, we think, has been enhanced by the dignity with which the crushing blows have been dealt. Never once did Mr. Mitchell pull his punches, but his language has been the choicest. When he came to the latest fantastic defense which the Germans are offering respecting the Ahrendt postscript, even the Umpire was unable to control his amusement. Mr. Mitchell then dropped for a moment the language of diplomacy and, after characterizing the defense as a complete "cock and bull story," wound up his argument on that point as follows:

> "Now there is a French expression that relates to things that are incredible—stories—and I think the literal translation of it is 'it is to laugh!' And there is a British expression that originated in the British Navy 150 years ago, which is, 'Tell that to the marines!' I think I am perfectly within the limits of fair argument when I say that their explanations of this Ahrendt postscript are in that category."

I must also give you the final and concluding words with which Mr. Mitchell closed his argument yesterday for the United States:

> "She [Germany] has asserted from the beginning that she wanted to bring out the truth and suppress nothing, and she wants justice and equity done among nations, regardless of consequences. But now she says that even though she gained the decision at Hamburg by deceit, suppression, a false defense, perjured evidence, she has a right to cling to the victory because it is technically too late to deprive her of it.
>
> "Can it be a tribunal like this must accept that contention? I hope that none of us will ever live to see the day when the United States, the victor before an international tribunal, faced with even a plausible claim that grave injustice has been done, fails promptly to concede a rehearing. . . ."

I have not time to write you more for the moment. . . .

GERMANY WALKS OUT!

The Commissioners retired from the Courtroom. While in the process of their deliberations, the German Commissioner, finding that the other two were against him, made a final desperate effort to defeat hostile awards. He announced suddenly his "retirement" from the Commission!

There had been many weird maneuvers. This was the weirdest of them all.

[Peaslee to Hall] May 16, 1939

Dear Sir Reginald:

The decision of the Mixed Claims Commission has not yet been announced, but there are indications that it will be forthcoming shortly. I am not sure whether I told you that the German Commissioner has pulled out—gone home. He won't play any more. The assumption is that he stayed in as long as he thought he could accomplish anything and, finding that impossible, he showed himself the true sportsman by walking off the field.

We have good reason to believe that his action was to some extent prompted by some of the self-same malicious advisers who have been collaborating with him for so long. They no doubt thought it a clever strategic move to try to block any valid decision. It is but a repetition of what has happened so many times before. In the middle of the argument in 1936, when the tide was running against them, they issued the invitation to come over and settle, with the result that the Umpire let them down with a sort of half decision and an opportunity to save their face. After that crisis was comfortably over, they gleefully thumbed their noses at the agreement which they had signed and strung the controversy along for another three years.

My private belief is that the Commission is pretty well awake to these tactics and is entirely fed up with them, and I think the Germans may have precipitated just the reverse of what they sought to accomplish. At the time of our oral argument in January, the most that we hoped for was a decision reopening the cases, with still the necessity of some further hearing before any final decision would be reached. The German Commissioner resigned early in March. Since that time we have made an exhaustive examination of all precedents, with the result that we are satisfied that the Commission has power to proceed with a reopening of the case. We are further convinced that it can, if it wishes, go the entire length and make a final disposition of the controversy and direct the entry of awards in favor of the American claimants. Whether the Commission will do that we do not know, but we are extremely hopeful that it will. It would be a mockery of justice if a government which has now been conclusively shown not only to have committed wholesale sabotage in violation of our neutrality, but also to have presented a flagrantly false and fraudulent defense to the claims, should be permitted to stave off again a judicial decision. The Germans were offered all sorts of opportunities to bow gracefully to the facts without the humiliation of a formal decision respecting guilt. Bull-headedly they declined them all, and now I hope they will get what they justly deserve.

Our family are all very well. Dody is a freshman at Swarthmore—the youngest girl in the college—and is enjoying it immensely. She took a ribbon in the college horse show last Saturday. Buzzy is at Groton. Lucy is in the Lycée Française de New York, where she has been having a concentrated year of courses given entirely in French. She floundered a bit at first but has been doing quite well since the first cold plunge. Dickie delighted his parents last week with a display of promise as a trackman, and won the 100-yard dash in the St. Bernard's spring sports. He has also been doing splendidly academically, leading his class consistently this year—all of the foregoing being duly submitted with a request for proper indulgence of parental pride.

We still have an apartment in New York, but I have been in Washington almost continuously since the first of the year, and we are hoping to live in the country near Philadelphia entirely after the first of June, and probably during all of next year. . . .

I hope to be able very soon to cable you some news of the Mixed Claims Commission's action, though you may receive it through the Press as quickly, for the cases have become a matter of widespread public interest, and our papers are carrying promptly all news respecting them.

Justice at Last

On June 15, 1939, the Mixed Claims Commission handed down a decision reopening the Hague decision of 1930 and also setting aside Justice Roberts' adverse decision of November 1932. It held that Germany had been guilty of sabotage and of having destroyed both the Black Tom and the Kingsland properties, and also of having presented a fraudulent defense at the earlier hearings. Commissioner Christopher B. Garnett's masterful opinion, in which Umpire Roberts concurred, read in part as follows:

[Commissioner Garnett's Opinion] June 15, 1939

. . . To hold that one National Commissioner could, by his voluntary retirement, whether authorized by his Government or not, prevent the Commission from further proceeding with the cases, and especially from deciding the questions at issue when the German Commissioner announced his retirement, would defeat the purpose of the two Governments in establishing this Commission, would deprive the American Nationals in these cases of the remedy provided by the Treaty of Berlin and the Agreement of August 10, 1922, for American Nationals with claims against the German Government recognized by that treaty, and would raise many questions difficult of solution, as to the disposition of the funds now remaining in the Treasury of the United States, pursuant to the Settlement of War Claims Act.

Accordingly, I am of the opinion that the retirement of the German Commissioner on March 1, 1939, did not render the Commission *functus officio* and did not deprive the Commission of the power to decide the questions at issue at the time of his retirement. . . .

. . . the pleadings filed on behalf of Germany were false, and were known to be false, in claiming that Germany had never authorized sabotage in neutral countries nor in the United States during its neutrality, and in claiming that, though men and material for sabotage were sent to the United States in 1916, definite instructions had been given limiting and prohibiting activity until the time when the United States should enter the war.

It has been clearly established that Wozniak, at whose bench the Kingsland fire started, and upon whose testimony the Commission relied in its decision at Hamburg, was guilty of perjury and fraud, and in addition, that, before his affidavits were filed, he demanded and received payments therefor. His demands, both oral and by letters, for compensation began before his affidavits were filed; and, although he was paid over $2,000, these demands had not ceased when Germany repudiated him as a witness. After his repudiation by Germany, he contradicted all of the important points of his former testimony.

The Lyndhurst testimony, upon which the Commission in fact based its decision at Hamburg with regard to the Kingsland fire, was false and purchased, and known to have been false before the affidavits were filed by Germany, and the witnesses producing the testimony were promised additional compensation when the case should be closed.

Ahrendt, Wochst and Hinsch, German witnesses produced to disprove the confessions of Herrmann and Hilken, are shown to have been perjurers and guilty of the grossest forms of prevarication.

Hinsch, upon whose testimony Germany mainly relied to break down the confessions of Herrmann and Hilken and to destroy the Herrmann message, began his sabotage activities under Rintelen and continued them, under Hilken as paymaster, until he was forced to flee from this country to escape a Presidential warrant of arrest. In order to substantiate Germany's false pleadings Hinsch made many false statements upon which the Commission relied in its opinions. . . .

We have, therefore, concluded that the decision of October 16, 1930, reached at Hamburg, must be set aside, revoked and annulled. . . .

Since the authenticity of the Herrmann message has been established, the liability of Germany in both the Black Tom case and in the Kingsland case has now been clearly established by the record, and the cases are in position for awards.

When the newspapers flashed this development to England, Hall dispatched the following cable:

[Hall to Peaslee] June 16, 1939

Peaslee, New York
Heartiest congratulations to you Greatheart. Triumphal vindication and justification of your many years work. Regards

Admiral Hall

[Peaslee to Hall] June 20, 1939

Dear Sir Reginald:

You are very kind. But did not "Greatheart" follow only in Volume II after the really hard trail had been blazed by "Christian"?

In any event, I am humbly conscious of the fact that but for your genius so aptly described by Ambassador Page in his letter to President Wilson, which the American Commissioner quoted in his opinion, we would never have even started on the pilgrimage.

I am sending you copies of the two opinions—the American Commissioner's and the Umpire's. The American Commissioner's discussion of the record is, in my judgment, the best one which has yet been written. I understand that he has worked for long hours during the past five months in preparing it, and I am not surprised. It is remarkable that he has been able to master it so well in that time. . . .

More astounding effrontery can hardly be imagined than that which is coming from the German Press. It is alleging that the seized German private property is being "confiscated" to meet these claims. They say that it is the decision of a "rump commission."

The facts are that Germany received from the arbitration with the United States just about three times the amount that the United States got out of it. Germany received about $500,000,000 of seized property. It induced the United States to consent to the creation of a War Claims Arbiter who gave awards of about $85,000,000 in favor of Germans against the United States for German ships that were seized and used for war purposes. The Germans have already received in cash an additional $45,000,000 respecting this. They were even paid for some ships which the German submarines sank! Germany also was successful in inducing the Commission to dismiss more than half of the claims of American nationals.

Thus, after obtaining all the major benefits of the arbitration, Germany now takes the position that it could walk out when an adverse decision threatened, and that it could defeat justice by trying to render the Commission impotent to act!

The Awards are Entered

Formal proofs as to the amount of damages were then taken, and on October 30, 1939, the awards were entered—23 years and 4 months after Black Tom was destroyed. They amounted, with interest, to about $55,000,000.

As the curtain was thus falling upon the last act in this drama, Franz von Rintelen, the mystery man who had begun German sabotage in the United States in 1915, and who during all the years of trial had refused to testify for either side, advised Admiral Hall that he was at last ready to tell all. He intimated that he had information that the "Department of Justice" would still permit him to be heard. Whether the German Foreign Office put him up to this will probably never be known. But it was too late for any more delays or tricks. The Commission would not have listened to him at that stage. The Americans had won without his testimony.

[Peaslee to Hall] November 13, 1939

Dear Sir Reginald:

. . . The awards were entered by the Mixed Claims Commission at a session on October 30th. The German Government continued its refusal to participate in the proceedings.

The Secretary of State, cooperating splendidly with us, certified all the awards over for payment by the Treasury the following morning and prior to the institution of any suit. A suit, however, was filed in the afternoon of October 31st by one of the awardholders, and we are making application for permission to intervene and also requesting forthwith a mandamus in cooperation with the governmental departments. . . .

I fancy that Rintelen's information to you about the Department of Justice is not accurate. There is no consideration at present of taking any more testimony for any purpose. The decrees of the Commission have placed us long beyond that stage.

We think of you a great deal and shall be so happy if you can spend some time with us this winter.

The Supreme Court Declines to Review

Although the Commission's work was concluded, the validity of its decision was tested in the federal courts by some of the opposing interests. The Supreme Court, in an opinion written by Chief Justice Hughes, unanimously held on January 6, 1941, that the Commission could not be deprived of jurisdiction by the German Commissioner's maneuver in "retiring" from the Commission, and it declined to review the Commission's awards.

And so the Black Tom and Kingsland cases go down as the most celebrated in the entire history of International Arbitrations. None was ever more bitterly contested. None ever led to a more humiliating exposure and defeat of a sovereign government.

The judgment of $55,000,000 was thrice the amount awarded in the famous Alabama claims. Greater importance, however, lay in the issues which were decided and in the prominence of the witnesses, who included many of the best known public officials of Germany and the United States of the last war.

The Commission's final decision, holding that Germany had not only committed sabotage in the United States, but had presented a fraudulent defense in claims before an International Tribunal, was the first holding of its kind respecting a sovereign member of the Family of Nations.

Home on furlough, he took a busman's holiday and fought two extra battles.

by DANIEL WINTERS

Punch for

SERGEANT JOHNNY MERCER had been home for a week, and the city still seemed new and exciting to him. A year and a half was a long time to stay away. A year and a half, and twenty-eight completed missions in a B-17 over Germany, France and Norway!

Now he had a month's leave. He had thought of it as a month in which he might fool around, visit all the old places, catch up on his drinking.

But it wasn't going to be like that at all. He had come home to bad news:

His sister's husband had been killed in an auto accident—had been walking across the street and hit by a careening car. He had left his wife with three children. He had been, it developed, negligent about the matter of insurance, and his family could get nothing from the driver of the car which had killed him, for the man was penniless and uninsured.

Johnny would have to go to work. He had not intended to, but it was obvious that he must. Being middleweight champ gave him access to some fast money; and fast money was needed at the moment. One fight, while he was on leave, and he could go back to being a waist gunner again with a clear and comforted mind. One fight would leave Jennie and the kids sitting pretty.

Johnny had gone to the little Midwestern city to see his sister. They had a small home, but they wouldn't have it long, under the present setup. They had the clothes on their backs, but not much else. The kids were cute as hell, and they thought he was really big stuff. The little boy followed him like a shadow, because he was middleweight champ. The two little girls paraded after him constantly, in love with his uniform.

He had stayed for two days, then had come back to the city to see what could be done about the matter.

That was what he was doing now, down in Dixie Doyle's office. The Army had okayed a fight. He'd made arrangements for a sizable percentage of the purse to go to Army-Navy Relief. His cut of the remainder would be sufficient for the needs of Jennie and the children.

It was not strange that he regarded his own financial well-being as unimportant in this instance. To Johnny, money had always been something you got rid of as fast as it came to you. He had been a very fast man with a dollar, which was why, out of all the money he had made in years of fighting, nothing remained. He'd had a fine time and he harbored no regrets; but he didn't have more than a couple of hundred dollars to his name.

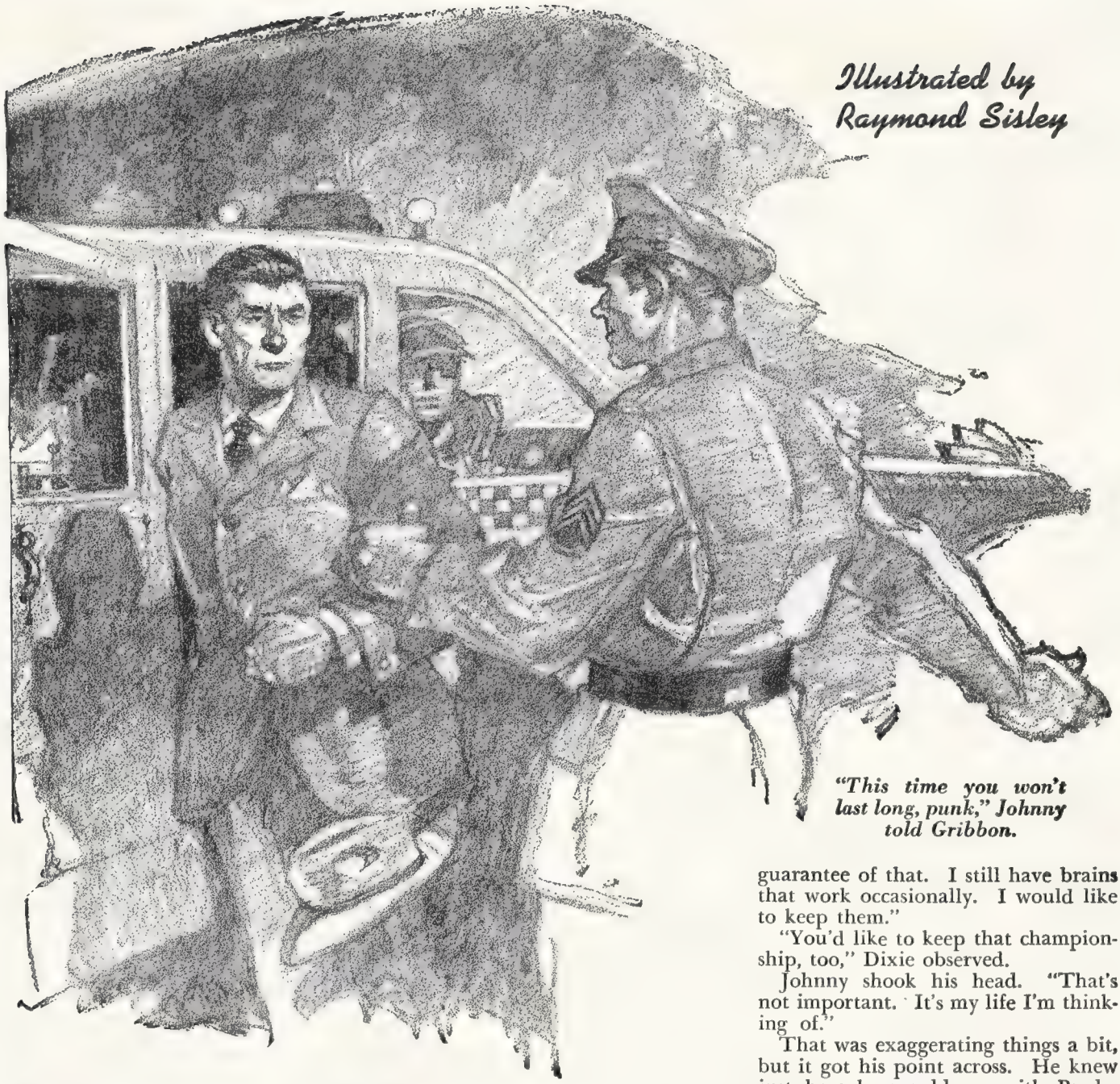
He sat across the desk from Dixie Doyle now, and said: "It's okay. I saw the Army and they gave me their blessing. Army-Navy Relief gets a third of the gate. The rest, you can handle."

Dixie nodded. "We'll make money. You will draw like Walt Disney. Two-three hundred thousand bucks, or I'm out of my mind. You and José Prado. They'll come down from the hills to see that."

Johnny said, "Well—" and he drew it out. He said it again: "Well—he wasn't quite the guy I had in mind."

He had avoided the thought of Prado as he had avoided the thought of jumping off the Empire State Building. He would go into a ring with Prado with the same enthusiasm that would take him into a small dark closet which he knew contained a cobra. He wanted no part of Prado.

Dixie looked at him. "What's the matter, Johnny? You were never a guy to pick your spots. You were never a cautious gent."



Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

"This time you won't last long, punk," Johnny told Gribbon.

Your Pennies

Johnny lit a cigarette. "Leave us face it," he told Dixie. "We have both been around, Dixie. We have no secrets. It used to be I'd fight any guy that came along the pike. That was a few years ago. I am no longer a tough and tireless youth. I am thirty years old. Prado would murder me. You know it. I know it. So there's no sense to fighting Prado."

José Prado had come up out of Mexico a little over two years before. He was fast and smart, and he punched savagely, accurately, and with a vast amount of enthusiasm. He had eyes like a big tawny cat, and a heart chiseled out of a piece of steel. He was murder with gloved hands. Johnny didn't even care to see him at a distance.

Dixie nodded. "There is much in what you say."

"There is sense in it," Johnny told him. "There are three-four other guys I can fight. I don't know whether I can lick them or not. But I know that I can go in there with them, go a certain number of rounds, and still walk out with my head on my shoulders. With Prado, I could have no guarantee of that. I still have brains that work occasionally. I would like to keep them."

"You'd like to keep that championship, too," Dixie observed.

Johnny shook his head. "That's not important. It's my life I'm thinking of."

That was exaggerating things a bit, but it got his point across. He knew just how he would go, with Prado. He could hold that killer off for perhaps six or eight rounds; then the guy would get to him. From there on, it would be slaughter. He didn't like the idea, and could see no sense to it. He'd gone through plenty of trouble in the last year and a half, and it seemed pretty foolish to come back home and let some murderous slob make hamburger of him. Three or four years ago, it would have been all right. He could have taken care of Prado, then. It would have been a hell of a fight, but he would have beaten the Mexican. But in three or four years, a lot of bounce had gone out of his legs, a lot of punching power had left his arms. Two years of not fighting at all had not improved him, he was sure. He would have nothing to do with Prado, he determined.

"Wasn't there some little thing you were going to ask me about this time tonight?"

"There's Manny Weeks," he told Dixie. "Or Joe Gribbon or Tommy Fox. They're all good boys, and they're all human beings. I won't need a gun to defend myself."

Dixie looked at him. "Gribbon can beat you, Johnny. He's good."

A familiar feeling came into Johnny's chest, the old light into his eyes. He said: "That's where you're wrong, Dixie. I can take that guy twice a week. And even if you're right, it's okay. He won't tear my arms off."

Dixie nodded. "Okay, then. It'll be Gribbon. He's good, and he'll draw. He'll probably be the favorite, too. Three weeks be all right?"

Johnny shrugged. Three weeks would have to be all right. It was all the time he had.

HE told Marge about it that night, at the Kitten Club. Marge Jordan was tall, dark-haired and completely lovely. Johnny had spent a great deal of time thinking about her, in the last year and a half. Marge was twenty-eight, and very few things had to be explained to her. It had been understood for several years that she and Johnny would one day be married. They just never seemed to get around to it.

They sat at a table in a corner, after Marge had entertained the many customers with several songs. Her voice was husky and low, and when Johnny listened to her, funny things happened to his spine.

He told Marge all about the arrangements, and she looked at him and said softly: "My! The young man is getting some sense! I thought you'd insist on walking in with Prado."

Johnny told her: "If it wasn't for Jennie and those wonderful brats of hers, I wouldn't lace a glove on. I thought I was going to spend a month, just hanging around looking at you, and now I've got to go to work."

It would mean a couple of weeks of being away from her, a period of hard work. In this month at home, he had thought to make Marge Mrs. Mercer. The idea had been strong within him, though he was reluctant to marry such a wonderful gal, then go off and get himself shot full of holes. There was no percentage for the gal in such a deal. Now the matter had been taken out of his hands. Romance would have to wait. He looked at Marge, and regretted this fact keenly. She was a lovely thing.

She said, smiling: "Okay, Johnny. Go on up in the hills and make a few muscles, then come back and have Gribbon hand you your head. I'll be around."

That was something he could count on. Marge would be around. It was nice to know.

So he got Tim Healy, and they went to a place Johnny knew of, back in the woods. He had used the capacious farm of the Todds as a training-camp several times before. The old couple was glad to see him. They liked him a lot.

Tim Healy was one of the great handlers of the game. He worked Johnny easily for a week—long hikes, and sessions with the bags, and the fine clear air of the hills searched deep into Johnny's lungs, and brought to him vitality and a new strength. After six days, Healy said to him: "I don't know what those people in the Air Corps do to you, but you aint in bad shape. I'm sendin' down to the city for a couple of boys. You could stand a little work."

Tony Rocco and Sal Silvers and Jimmy Beans came up in answer to Healy's summons. Rocco was a good middleweight, the others were lightweights. Johnny worked.

He had weighed a hundred and fifty-three when he had come out to the farm. In two weeks he was down to a hundred forty-six and feeling fine. He was plugging along with Rocco one afternoon when it came back to him, the feeling and rhythm of the work. One moment he was just another fighter, moving around in a practiced manner, going through the more-or-less standard motions of his trade. Then something clicked inside his head and his back and in his arms and legs, and he was suddenly Johnny Mercer, the master workman. He stabbed out his left, and Rocco's heavy chin was there to meet it. He went inside a right hand and was busy at Rocco's body. He slipped outside, hooked his left to Rocco's head, threw his right hand down the line. Rocco went back on his heels, a surprised expression on his face, and Johnny started to follow him, then remembered. He worked out the round with a pleased smile on his face, and when they finished, Rocco said: "What the hell happened to you, boss?"

Johnny shook his head. "I just found something I was afraid I'd lost, kid."

And Timmy Healy grunted at him and said: "I was wondering how long it would take." But he was pleased, Johnny could see. Young Gribbon's job would be a bit more difficult, now.

He worked right up until two days before the fight. He was keen and sharp and strong. He said to Healy: "Timmy, everything is working right, but I don't know how long the pieces will stay together. How good is this Gribbon?" He had seen the guy fight only once, about three years before. He didn't remember him too well.

"He's good," Timmy said. "Fast, and he hits hard. He'll take a lot of beating. You got a night full of fighting with that boy. But you don't look bad. I'm surprised."

They went to the city the night before the fight, and the town was excited and full of talk. Johnny discovered that Gribbon was the favorite, at eight to five, and this surprised him quite a bit. He knew, from what Healy and others had told him, that the guy was good. But Johnny Mercer had not been on the short end of the odds for many a year—not since he had been champion, at any rate. It galled him; he knew he hadn't slipped that far.

He went to the Kitten Club that night. He didn't tell Marge he was coming, and he sat at a table in the rear and treated himself to the sight of her, the sound of her voice. Her dark, full beauty filled him with excitement and tenderness, and her voice reached to the toes of him. She must have seen him while she was singing, for when her numbers were done, she came directly to his table.

She sat down and examined him carefully. She said: "I hear you're coming along. They tell me you're a promising young man, Mercer." But her eyes were anxious, tender. She said: "No bumps, so far?"

He shook his head and grinned. "Not until tomorrow. Give me a chance, will you?" He took her hand. "It's good to see you. It's seemed a long while."

Marge said: "Please! Mr. Mercer! This is so sudden!" He lit a cigarette for her, and she told him: "Tomorrow night you'd better be good. This little girl will be richer by eight hundred bucks, do you win that little contest."

He shook his head. "You shouldn't have risked your money, babe. Little Johnny isn't quite what he used to be."

"Little Johnny is all right for my money," Marge told him, and that pleasant type of happy bell started ringing in his brain.

He said: "Okay. If you lose your dough, I'll buy you a fur coat."

"How's about if I win?" she asked.

"I'll buy you the fur coat anyway."

THAT night he slept well, and in the morning there was a letter waiting for him, from Jennie, wishing him luck. Jennie was a nice gal. She asked for nothing and had no idea, Johnny knew, that she was the only reason he was fighting tonight. The three kids had signed it. He was glad to be doing something for them. This was one purse the night-clubs and the bars and the horses wouldn't get. If it was a really good lump, this evening's work would send those kids to school for a long time. . . .

He met Gribbon for the first time when they weighed in at the Commission offices that afternoon. Gribbon was slender, ropy. He looked as if he might be fast, and he had the shoulders of a hitter. He had a narrow, expressionless face, only slightly the worse for the work he did. He was not a pleasant-looking person.

His manager, Bibsy Morgan, was even less digestible. Johnny knew him from way back. Bibsy was not a nice man. He was carefully shady; and his short, blubbery body with the expressive hands somehow reminded Johnny of a toad. Johnny did not like Bibsy Morgan; few people did—which fact didn't bother Morgan at all. He went his twisting way, and things always seemed to be all right with him. He ate well and dressed well, and that was fine with Bibsy.

There were some pictures taken, and the boys from the papers were there. Johnny hadn't wanted to see much of them at the farm, for there had been too much work to do in too short a time. They were his pals. He had always pulled right with them. They were busy with questions, now. They wanted to know about his service in England. They asked about medals, and Johnny shook his head. He had the usual few, but there seemed little sense talking about them. The man from the *Times* said: "And no Purple Heart, eh, Johnny?"

Johnny flushed at that, but shook his head again. That was one thing he didn't care to talk about at all.

Healy rushed him to the hotel they were staying at, immediately after the weigh-in, and practically crammed him into bed. Johnny slept peacefully for a couple of hours; then they went out to Grogan's for a steak. Johnny had called Marge, and she came into Grogan's shortly after they arrived. She was wearing a gray flannel suit and an atrocious hat, and Johnny knew he had never seen a lovelier woman.

She ate as heartily as Johnny, and when he kidded her, she shrugged and said, "I just got a new girdle. I can eat what I like."

She wasn't going to the fight. She was a bug, but she didn't like to see Johnny work. Said it made her nervous. She'd be at the Kitten Club when it was over. She'd get the story done. When they left, Johnny kissed her and walked away on a cloud. He and Healy went back to the hotel and played rummy for a while; then it was time to get up to the ball park.

Johnny took a look at the crowd before he went to the dressing-room. The place was not packed, for seldom do ninety thousand people care to see a middleweight fight. But the crowd was big—big enough for a huge purse. There were forty or fifty thousand in the seats.

He was nervous in the dressing-room, but the tension was a familiar

thing, often experienced, always expected; and he would have been lost without it. The old lump of ice hid somewhere within his belly, and he felt an urge to keep his hands moving. Healy let him walk around the room and loosen up a bit, then smothered him in a robe and made him lie down.

And it was not long before they called him. A battered young man stuck his head in the door and said: "You're on next, Champ. They just finished the semi."

THEY went down the long aisle to the ring—Johnny and Tim Healy and Benny Saxe, who would help in the corner. The noise started when the crowd caught sight of them, and it continued all the way down to the ring. He heard a lot of guys yelling, "Kill the bum, Sarge!" and he knew there was a lot of Army in the house.

Gribbon was in the ring when he got there. Johnny took his corner, and the feeling of the whole thing came back to him, and it was good. He liked the canvas under his feet, the glare of the heavy lights overhead, the strong crowd-noises. It was all very familiar, all newly exciting.

They gave him a big hand when Clem Carson, the announcer, pointed to his corner and yelled: "Sergeant Johnny Mercer, middleweight champion of the world!"

He went out then to the center of the ring; and Gribbon was there, with his flat dead pan, and Eddie Evans, the referee. Evans told them the usual story, slapped them each on the back, and they returned to their corners. Tim Healy said: "Remember, Johnny. He's good, he's fast, and he can hit like hell."

Johnny grinned at him: "What I like about you is that you're so cheerful, Healy. Haven't you anything encouraging to say?"

The bell turned him and sent him out.

They fiddled through the first round. He found out immediately that Gribbon was fast, that he was smart. Near the end of the round Gribbon caught him with a hard right hand, while he was going away, and he knew the full story was true. The guy could hit, along with his other virtues. It would be an evening.

Healy said nothing during the rest, for there was nothing to say. He was well aware of the fact that Johnny knew his business, had to acquaint himself with Gribbon before the thing really developed. He washed Johnny's face and sponged his neck, and let him rest.

In the second, Johnny felt his legs getting the stride of the fight. He was not a man for moving much. His hands were deft, his body practiced with years of experience. He didn't have to jump across the ring to avoid a punch. He stood up there nicely, his left hand a dangerous lance, the right a heavy threat which he did not unleash unless there was a spot for it. He threw it twice to Gribbon's head in that round, and once he connected with it, just a bit high.

Gribbon was faster than himself—younger, more packed with bounce. He possessed a native shrewdness and had long been at the fistic wars. He was aware of many little tricks, and he tried them on Johnny. Johnny grinned icily and clipped the guy upon the beard, and Gribbon stopped his fooling.

The third went by; and in the middle of the fourth, Johnny got to Gribbon with a left hook that was heavy. Gribbon went back upon his heels, and Johnny chopped him with the right. He worked Gribbon into a corner and hammered his belly for a solid ten seconds, then raised the barrage to the head. Gribbon was hurt but fought back hard; and finally Johnny dropped him with a short right hand. He walked away, breathing a little hard, knowing that Gribbon would get up.

He was on one knee at "six," on his feet at "eight." Johnny went to him, stabbing with the left, trying to set him up. But Gribbon's legs were strong and took him out of trouble. The round ended with Johnny stalking Gribbon along the ropes, and the crowd's roar subsided with the bell.

Johnny went back and Tim said, "Well, you tagged him. You hurt him. You'll have to keep hurting him. He's young and strong."

"I'll keep hurting him," Johnny said. He knew who this fight would go to. He was running the affair now, and he would continue making the fight. Gribbon was good, but Johnny knew he would take the guy. He was champion of the world, and they were very inclusive words, and when tonight's work was done, he would still be champion. It would be a tough evening, and by no means was it over, but he felt that strong kernel of confidence within himself that had always been there. He hadn't lost too much.

He watched the riot in Gribbon's corner. They were standing in front of the guy, and even Bibsy Morgan was in the ring, his porky arms waving like futile wings, his voice loud and snarlingly angry. Johnny grinned. They sure were giving the guy hell. Bibsy Morgan was a great hand for eating the head off a fighter who couldn't seem to keep his chin out of the way.

In the fifth he made Gribbon work, coming to him all the time, and he punished the guy when it was convenient. Near the end of the round Gribbon caught him flush on the whiskers with a whistling left hook, and the lights went out for a moment, and Johnny groped for cover. There was none. Gribbon propped him off with a smart left and fed him three heavy right hands in a row. Just as he got inside, the left banged into his chin again, and Johnny's knees buckled as he grabbed Gribbon. He held on in there long enough for his head to clear, and just before the bell he drove Gribbon away with a short right that was loaded with power.

He went back to the corner, and the stool felt good under him. His legs were quivering slightly, showing the strain of the heavy going, but he knew there were plenty of rounds in them yet.

Tim Healy said: "He hits, Johnny."

Johnny nodded. Okay. The guy hit. He had been hit before, and by harder punchers than this kid. He had been dropped, on several occasions, and those strong legs had always taken him into battle again. He wondered how often he would have to depend upon them in similar circumstances tonight.

He told Healy: "I'm all right, Tim. It'll take a little while, maybe, but it's my fight. A tough evening's work, as you warned me."

Healy nodded.

"I believe you," he agreed.

Johnny went to work in the sixth, whittling at Gribbon, cutting him down. He had the range now, and things were just a trifle easier. It was tough wood he was working on, and the ax of his skill was not so sharp as once it had been, but he knew he would cut through this Gribbon before the end of the fight.

There were perhaps thirty seconds of the round to go when it happened. He had worked Gribbon into a corner. He stabbed him with a left, hooked it once unsatisfactorily, and threw the right. Gribbon pulled his head to one side, and the punch grazed his ear.

And Gribbon fell flat on his face!

JOHNNY had to step back to get out of the way, and his surprise almost held him motionless. He had to fend off the man's falling body with his hands, as it was: and his amazement was clear upon his face as he stepped away toward a corner. He didn't get it.

Evans, a heavy frown on his face, picked up the count from the knockdown timekeeper. At "five," Gribbon climbed to his knees, his head heavy and slung low. He stayed in that position through "seven," then his arms slipped out from under him and he collapsed. He was lying on his side at "ten."

It was phony, Johnny knew. It was a dive if he had ever seen one. The punch had not connected, but Gribbon had acted as if someone had hit him with a hammer. Johnny stood there, his arms on the angle formed by the ropes, as Gribbon's handlers came out and picked him up. They carried the strangely un-limp figure to the corner and propped him on the stool. Johnny walked to his own corner and stood there, wondering what the hell. He looked at Gribbon. The guy was coming around quickly, which was not remarkable, for he had never been out.

NOW Johnny heard the crowd; the noise the mob made was a mixture of joy and anger. The roar of the thousands near the ring was an expression of pure fury, for to many of them the thing had been obvious. Johnny said to Healy: "What the hell makes, Tim?"

Tim put a towel over his shoulders, wrapped him in the robe. "That's something I wouldn't know about. There are a lot of things that Bibsy Morgan is mixed up in that I don't *want* to know about. I guess this is one of them."

Clem Carson came over then, and raised his hands for silence. He held Johnny's right arm above his head and shouted something about "—and still champion!" But Johnny hardly heard him. The words were blotted out by the anger in his heart, and the heavy disdainful roar of the mob.

He remembered the uproar in Gribbon's corner after the fourth, the round in which he had dropped Gribbon. He recalled the angry, unintelligible words of Bibsy Morgan, and his violent gestures. He knew what that had been about, now. He had thought they had been censuring Gribbon for letting himself get tagged. They'd really been bawling hell out of him for not taking the count on that first and fairly legitimate occasion. It had been a good out for him, but his mind had been dulled by the blow that had knocked him down. And when he had taken his dive, he hadn't performed too skillfully.

It was a mess, and Johnny wanted to get away from it as soon as he could. He said: "Come on, Timmy. This ring smells lousy." He went up the aisle, and silence preceded him on the way and enfolded him as he progressed. He felt the eyes of the crowd, felt them exercising upon him their doubt, was aware of the impact of their distrust. He had never been so regarded before. It was the first time he had walked out of a ring mantled in shame, and he did not like the experience. It seemed a hundred miles to the dressing-room, and it was a refuge that he welcomed.

"You reach for me, Fats, and you're strictly from hamburger."

He showered and dressed in silence, and when he was putting a tie on, Benny Saxe said: "That Bibsy! A fine hunk of meat!"

Tim Healy lit a cigarette savagely. "A typical Morgan trick. He's not satisfied to let things alone. It was a good fight. That punk kid might have won. But Bibsy took advantage of the odds and loaded a bunch of careful dough on you. He doesn't take any chances. You probably would have taken Gribbon on the level, but he couldn't depend on that. He had to send that louse into the tank. He insures every dollar he invests."

Johnny was sick with the thing. "It's fine for me," he said. "Makes me feel good. I was just getting the swing of the thing again. That guy was all mine. And then they have to pull a prize performance like that."

He thought of many years of keeping faith with a game that had been good to him. The hundreds of thousands who had come to see him fight had trusted him, and he'd never let them down. His integrity had been absolute—and tonight ten years' work had been cast into the discard. It was a bitter hour. . . .

Johnny left the ball-park alone. He wanted this thing to himself for a while, so that he could digest it, get the smell of it out of his nose. He walked from his dressing-room into the night air, and there he stopped. Gribbon had left just before him, and was getting into a cab with Morgan. Johnny stepped forward quickly. He took Gribbon by the shoulder, spun him about. He slapped him across the face with an open hand. He told him: "This time you won't last long, punk."

Gribbon recognized him, snarled an oath, and punched savagely at Johnny's head. The shot was high, and it was the only one that Gribbon had a chance to throw.

JOHNNY worked on him with both hands, punching with terrific speed and force and anger. He hit with left and right, short, hooking punches that had all his body behind them. Gribbon went back against the side of the cab, and Johnny pinned him there with a right hand that came from all the way down the line. Gribbon started to slump, and Johnny let him have it once again, hooking the left solidly to his chin. The guy fell forward on the sidewalk, and there was no faking about it this time. Bibsy Morgan started to yell, and Johnny cursed him fluently and smashed him across the mouth with the back of his hand. Bibsy fell into the open cab, and Johnny walked away.

The thing had happened so swiftly that few people had witnessed the incident. Johnny went across the street, and was instantly lost in the crowd.

He walked for a while, until the rage died out of him; then he got a cab and went down to the Kitten Club. Marge was the person he wanted to see. She'd take some of the rottenness out of the evening.

She had just finished a group of songs when he arrived, and she came to him slowly, her eyes wise and slightly questioning. She sat down and said: "So you don't have to buy me a fur coat. My money had a lot of company."

He looked at her quickly. There was something in her voice that told him she knew something was wrong. She had a way of finding out about things.

Johnny said: "I've got a funny feeling I wouldn't be able to buy you an ice-cream cone, did I depend on what I made tonight."

She said: "Tell Marge about it."

He shrugged. "It was phony as a three-dollar bill. The guy went into the tank in the sixth."

She nodded. "The radio gentleman said practically the same thing." Her eyes were curious, searching.

Johnny shook his head. "Oh, no! This little boy had nothing to do with it. The whole thing was a lovely surprise. You could have knocked me down with a crowbar. A little of Bibsy Morgan's doing, I guess."

She said: "Bibsy bets on you, taking the odds, and then polices his bet."

He nodded and lit a cigarette. "I didn't even hit him. the time he dived. He had an opportunity a few rounds before, but he was goofy and muffed it."

She was looking at his hands. The knuckles were skinned. She asked: "Don't they make you wear gloves any more?"

"I ran into Gribbon after the fight."

"You mean, *before* the fight and after the dive. It must have been interesting, darling."

Johnny said: "Yeah, the whole thing was lovely. Just one big happy evening." He was disgusted.

Marge told him: "Have a drink. Have two or ten or so. They won't do you any harm tonight."

Johnny thought it might be a good idea. He had a couple, sat there until Marge was through for the night, then took her home. At the door of the apartment, she said, a quizzical smile on her lovely face: "Wasn't there some little thing you were going to ask me, about this time tonight?"

Johnny looked at her, and it was an action that always gave him much pleasure. He had thought of tonight as a good time to cement things, to speak belatedly of a ring and of a pretty cottage located some place in the future. But this was not the evening for romance. He kidded his way out of it. He said: "Yeah, but you'd slap my face." Then he told her: "I'll call you tomorrow."

Tomorrow, as he found out when it arrived, was a day filled with trouble. He saw hints of it in the morning papers, which spoke of the fight in lurid phrases. He got the full impact of it when he was called on the phone from the Commission offices and told that the purse of the fight was being held up. He was to come down, he was told, in the afternoon, and see the commissioners.

IT was a stormy session. Evans, the ref, was there, as were the judges and timekeepers. Bibsy Morgan had Gribbon in tow. Morgan looked fat and sleek and satisfied, as usual, but Johnny noticed with satisfaction the man's swollen lips. Gribbon was a little the worse for wear. One eye was deeply shaded, there was a cut over the other, and his nose was swollen and at a slight angle.

The questions came thick and fast, and blunt accusations were made. The ringside officials concurred in their opinion that the thing had been lousy and arranged, and Morgan was noisily indignant.

Johnny told the assemblage: "I've been in this business a long time, and I've never been in anything like this before. You people know that. There's no reason why I should start now. I'm as clean as the freshest collar in the room."

One of the commissioners, new to Johnny and with the suspicious eyes of a born detective, said: "A fast investigation has been made, Mercer, and it's been found that you have hardly a penny to your name. You're not getting any younger, and it might be that you'd permit yourself to be made a party to certain arrangements in order to keep that title."

Johnny contained his anger. He looked at the man. "Wouldn't that be a silly thing for me to do, when I can lick this tramp?" He jerked a thumb toward Gribbon.

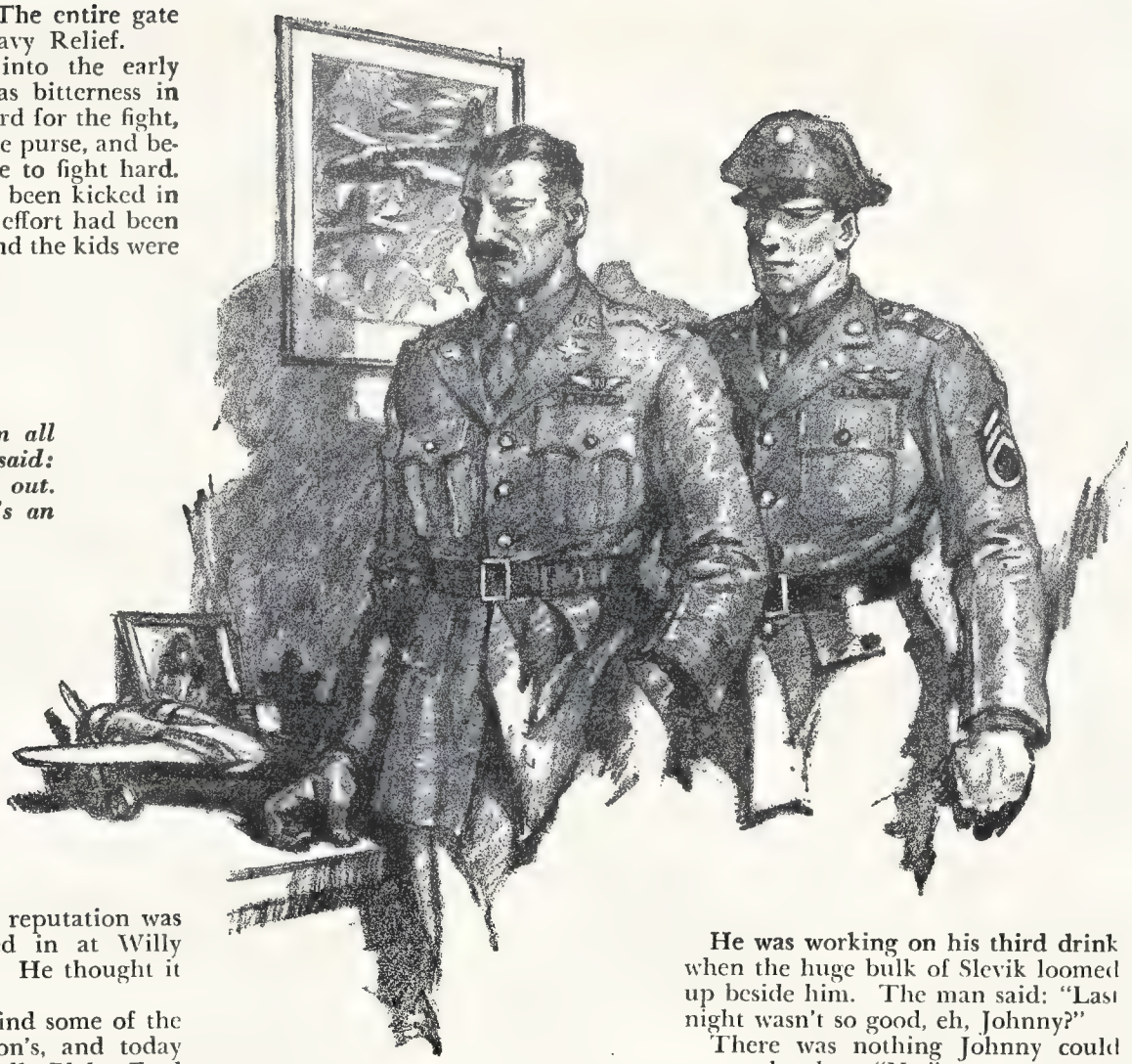
The man said: "I notice you wouldn't have anything to do with Prado. If you'd tangled with him, there would have been no question of a bad performance. You couldn't have done business with Prado."

"I'd murder that silly-looking jerk," Johnny told them. His anger was speaking now, and the pride that was such a large part of him.

The commissioners went into a huddle, and Johnny sweated it out in the waiting-room. They came out of their confab after a time, and told Johnny, Gribbon and the assembled press of their decision in the matter. The purses had been held up, and in view of all the facts and the terribly suspicious circumstances, Gribbon and Johnny would not be paid for what

was termed a farce. The entire gate would go to Army-Navy Relief.

Johnny went out into the early evening, and there was bitterness in him. He'd worked hard for the fight, had fought hard for the purse, and because it was his nature to fight hard. Now his plans had all been kicked in the back. The entire effort had been for nothing. Jennie and the kids were



Johnny told him all about things; he said: "And I have an out. It's silly, but it's an out."

no better off, his own reputation was smeared. He stopped in at Willy Gleason's for a drink. He thought it might help.

You could usually find some of the fight crowd in Gleason's, and today was no exception. Wally Blake, Fred Mills and Andy Loring were at the bar. They told him, "Tough going, Johnny," and bought him a drink. He didn't have to explain to these guys that he'd had no hand in the shady side of the affair. They knew him too well for that. So he drank with them a little bit, and thought a great deal about his problem, which was still unsolved.

It would be tough for him to make another fight. He had only a week of leave left, and the Army probably would not consent to another try, particularly after the last bad-smelling affair. He was far up the creek, and Jennie and the kids were just as badly off as they'd ever been. He was glad he'd taken an advance from Doyle for training expenses. That was the only thing he didn't have to worry about.

He didn't notice Fats Slevik coming in, which was unusual, for Fats was hard to miss. He was just about six feet tall and he weighed over three hundred pounds. Johnny heard one of the other men at the bar say, "Hello, Fats," and turned and saw him. Slevik glanced his way and lifted a hand in greeting. Johnny ignored him. He did not like Fats.

His dislike of the man arose from several reasons. Slevik had been in the game a long while; and offhand, Johnny couldn't think of anyone who had benefited, except Slevik. Fats always took good care of Number One, but he was a bit careless of the welfare of others. Johnny could name, at the moment, at least three fighters whom Fats had worked beyond their class, beyond their prime, until their brains were as well scrambled as any six eggs in an omelet. Slevik had a sinister dignity, and his terrible strength and utter ruthlessness killed in the cradle any protest against his methods. There had been a heavyweight of a few years ago, named Georgie Powell. He had worked for Fats, and he had disagreed with something Fats had planned. Johnny shuddered as he remembered what Georgie Powell had looked like when the crowd had seen him again.

BUT the appearance of Fats on this evening evoked Johnny's interest more than was usually the case, for Fats Slevik was José Prado's manager. They were a fine pair.

He was working on his third drink when the huge bulk of Slevik loomed up beside him. The man said: "Last night wasn't so good, eh, Johnny?"

There was nothing Johnny could say to that but: "No."

"You didn't make a nickel," Slevik mused.

Johnny corrected that. "I didn't make a penny. You got any more news?"

Slevik looked down at him. "Don't be tough with me, Mercer. You should know better."

Johnny reached out his arm for the bottle near by. He brought it down on the edge of the bar and it broke in half. He held the neck end in his hand. He told Slevik: "You reach for me, Fats, and you're strictly from hamburger." And he meant it. He was not in the mood to fool around with this man.

Slevik looked at him, and saw that he was serious. A veiled respect crept into his eyes. He said: "You should have fought my boy. This wouldn't have happened."

He was right in one respect. The fight would not have been phony. What else would have happened was another matter.

And suddenly Johnny saw his way out of the trouble he was mired in. It was a tough road to walk, but it would take Jennie and the kids into the clear, and it would square him

with the fight bugs. It would be extremely difficult to arrange, but there was no time like the present to start work.

He said: "Yeah, I should have fought Prado. Maybe you're right."

Slevik looked at him and nodded. "The gate would have been a lot bigger, and it would have been on the level. You robbed me of a lot of dough when you picked Gribbon."

It was time to plant the painful harvest. Johnny said: "Maybe it still isn't too late. Maybe it could still be a deal."

Slevik shook his head. "With all this stink? Besides, you've only got another week."

"Something might be done about that," Johnny said. His mind was busy with the idea. He didn't want to fight Prado any more than he wanted to play with a mad dog, but it seemed to be about the only way he'd be able to get his hands on some big money in a hurry. There were many difficulties in the way, but he might as well start removing them now.

He said to Slevik: "Maybe I could swing it. Maybe I could get another month. I could fight your guy in three weeks. How's about that?"

Slevik looked at him for a long moment without speaking, and Johnny knew his soul was being examined. Slevik was shrewd to the point of genius. He had never been forced into a bad bargain, Johnny knew. But he was not quite prepared for what the man was to say.

Slevik told him: "You gave us the go-by for Gribbon. It was a fight I wanted, and you picked that punk and loused up the whole works. Why the hell should we fight you now? That championship has a smell to it, after last night, and as soon as you go back to the Army, you know damn' well Prado'll be regarded as champ. We'll fight anyone we please."

"And make peanuts," Johnny told him. He was aware of many angles himself. Prado could make money. The crowd would always come out to see a killer like him. But it would take him eight or ten fights to reap the dough that Johnny and he would draw in one night.

SLEVIK shook his head, but Johnny knew there was a proposition in the back of the man's mouth. He waited for it, and Slevik finally said, "The only way we'd fight you, you wouldn't like."

There were a lot of interested listeners now, and Johnny knew what was in their minds. They were well aware of the fact that he wanted nothing to do with Prado, that he was sure the man would murder him. He said, now: "I'll fight that bum anywhere. In a ring or a backyard. For pesos or peanuts." The phrase had a resounding ring.

Slevik spotted him in those beady eyes. "The only way we'd fight you, Mercer, you wouldn't touch. No split on the purse. Winner take all."

Johnny knew he should have been expecting it, but it took his breath away. It was a lovely proposition. He stood to gain nothing but a merciless trimming. And he knew Slevik wasn't kidding. The guy had him by the short hair.

He said, "That's a hell of a way to do business. You want to fight on a barge, out in the river? Side purse of two thousand dollars in gold? You're fifty years behind the times."

Slevik shrugged his enormous shoulders. "You can take it or leave it. You want the fight, we don't. You been shootin' your mouth off about Prado. You arrange things with the Army, and we'll fight you. On our terms."

There were a lot of people looking at Johnny, now. He had the ball. His mind worked frantically for a moment, seeking a more comfortable arrangement, but there was none to be found. He told the bartender: "Set 'em, Barney. On me. I'm comin' into a lot of dough, soon." To Slevik he said: "Okay. We'll do it your way."

He saw Marge that night, and he wondered what she really thought about the Gribbon affair, whether or not she believed him mixed up in the dirt of it. He did not like to ask her, for he was afraid of what she might say. Her attitude, it seemed, had changed a trifle in some indefinable way.

He told her: "I'm trying to engineer another fight. I figure I'll try it again. The last one wasn't very profitable."

"Prado?" Marge asked.

He nodded. "That bogey-man has been in the air long enough. It's time someone salted him. I'm sick of hearing about him."

"He won't pull a Gribbon." Marge observed, and set him thinking again. "He's a tough guy."

"So am I. Or I used to be. I'm supposed to be champ."

"You'll be a real short-ender, this trip."

Johnny nodded. "Don't risk your dough. The fur coat department still goes. I should make a buck or two, this time."

"It's making it the hard way," she said. "You better make enough to buy a new set of ears." You never knew when this gal was kidding. . . .

Arranging the fight was really work. Johnny went to the Air Corps for an extension of leave. He finally cornered a Colonel Rivers, who was the top man. He gave it to him straight. He wanted another thirty days. He wanted to fight. He needed the money badly, and he wanted to wash away the bad taste of the last farce.

And Rivers told him that was just the trouble—the last one. It had really smelled up the joint. It was bad publicity. It did no one any good. Rivers didn't think it could be arranged, but he was helpful and offered a bit of hope. He was a nice guy. "If you could only give me some excuse to extend the leave, I'd be liable to say yes. I've seen you fight a lot, Mercer. I used to like watching you. Who would it be this time?"

"Prado," Johnny told him, and every time he mentioned that murderer's name, he could feel his head ringing under a hail of hard shots.

Rivers told him: "Give me half a chance, and I'll see what I can do. It's a fight I wouldn't dare miss."

AFTER that it was all simple, if a bit silly. Johnny went to see one of the Air Corps medical examiners. The man had practiced his profession in the city before the war, and Johnny had made use of his services on several occasions. Doctor Walsh had been a very fine man with a needle.

Johnny told him all about things. He said: "And I have an out. It's silly, but it's an out."

Walsh was interested.

"I've got a Purple Heart," Johnny said. "It's the most unpublicized Purple Heart in the business. If I wore it pinned over the wound, the damned medal would be in the way when I sat down. Flak, over St. Nazaire, about six weeks ago."

Walsh said: "Hm. Very interesting."

"I don't agree with you," Johnny continued. "But if you could say that a thirty-day extension of leave would help the thing to heal, and that the nature of the wound was such that no limit need be placed on my activity, why—"

"I think I see your point," Walsh told him, "and as far as I can tell from here, a thirty-day extension of leave would make you much more comfortable in the future." He was busy writing on a printed form.

Johnny grinned for the first time in days and put his heart in it. He said: "There will be a bunch of fine tickets for this thing in the mail for you, Doc. You have my gratitude."

"You have my sympathy," Doctor Walsh told him. "Such a place to be wounded!"

With the form given him by Walsh, Johnny returned to Rivers. The Colonel, he thought, was really glad of the excuse to grant the leave. He filled out the necessary form, frowning slightly. "I hope," he said, "that this will be no repetition of the last fight.

Prado could hit and Prado could take a punch. He looked easy to hit, but Johnny knew better.

Such a thing as that does no one any good."

Johnny wasn't kidding when he said, "This one is to blanket the other, Colonel. No one disliked that as much as myself. I'd like to have people think well of me."

The Colonel nodded. "We'd like 'em to think well of the Air Corps too, Mercer. Amounts to about the same thing." He handed Johnny the leave-extension papers. "Do a good job, Mercer." Then he said, "If there are any extra tickets—"

Johnny said, "There will be, Colonel. I'll send them to you. And thank you."

There was Doyle to see then, but no trouble was expected or encountered there. It was a money matter. Doyle was not concerned with honor, and Johnny and Prado would draw an enormous amount of money, even after the stinkeroo with Gribbon. He told Johnny, "They really have you by the ears, eh, Johnny?"

"So they figure," Johnny admitted. "Maybe I will surprise that Slevik."

"It's a tough trick," Doyle told him. "That guy gets up early."

Johnny got five thousand dollars, after a great deal of talking. It was for training expenses, and he needed it. He said good-by to Marge that night, and she told him, "Keep those cute ears pinned on. I'll be seeing you."

So he and Tim Healy went up to the farm again, and the Todds were slightly embarrassed at first, and Johnny knew they had listened to the Gribbon fight on the radio. Mrs. Todd fussed about Johnny for a day or two, then everything was all right. Johnny worked hard. The roads were long and hot and hard, and Healy saw that he traveled them. Four boys came up, at the end of the week, and Johnny whistled when he saw them. That five thousand wouldn't go too far at these prices. Welzer, Price, Vigo and Bruce were good workmen, and their services in a matter like this came high.

But they were just what he needed. Price and Vigo fought very much in the manner of Prado, and he took them for three rounds apiece in the afternoon and newly accustomed himself to the style of the fast, hooking killer he would meet in two weeks, now. They extended him, forced him to work hard, and he knew they were not in the same class as Prado. It would be a fine hour—or less—that he would spend with that man!

During the last week before the fight he tapered off the work. He did little boxing, and Healy confined his activities to long walks back into the hills. The fight-wise man said, "We can save a little of that energy. You can use it later. You're getting paid to fight Prado, not these guys."

"I'm getting what?" Johnny asked him.

"You're getting paid," Healy told him, and there was something in his voice that gave Johnny a lift. If Healy figured there was a chance. . .

They went into town the morning of the fight. Johnny had slept like a baby the night before, and he felt like a million dollars. The morning papers made Prado a two-to-one favorite, and he grinned at that. The guy wasn't *that* good. The papers mentioned the Gribbon fiasco and seemed to be of the opinion that Johnny should have put Gribbon away in a

round or two. He shook his head. "The guy takes a dive, and just because I'm not Superman, I'm part of the frame." Gribbon had been good. The papers seemed to forget that.

AT the weigh-in, Johnny met Prado for the first time. The man was a sleek animal—beady eyes set close in a small head, muscles running around his back like a bunch of snakes. He looked once at Johnny, grunted and turned away. Johnny said, "Great little talker, isn't he?"

"Anything he's got on his mind," Slevik informed him, "he says with his hands."

"You frighten me," Johnny said.

His tone was light, but the silent menace of the Mexican was fury on a thin chain, and Johnny looked forward to the night's work with no pleasure.

He called Marge early in the evening, when he'd had his nap, and she told him to take care of himself. He said, "I'll see you after the fight, unless this guy bites me in the leg."

He took a look at the ball park before he dressed. It was jammed; this was one the bugs wanted to see. The papers had played up the winner-take-all angle, and the vast difference of opinion concerning Johnny's honesty and his courage had drawn that part of the crowd not attracted by the cruel, stalking fight the Mexican always gave them.

He worked himself into a light sweat, in the dressing-room, and Healy bundled him up. He said, "You can lick this guy, Johnny. Keep him at a distance and whittle him down. For two years he's been knocking them dead. No one ever stays with him over the distance. You got to discourage him."

"A gun would be a great help," Johnny grinned. "I could discourage him fine if you could think of a way I could take a pistol in there with me. Or even a ball bat."

The icy feeling gripped his stomach, now, and he knew it would remain there until the first exchange of punches. He felt good. He was rested and strong and weighed the full hundred and sixty pounds. He was in good shape to work.

They got the call and went down to the ring, and their passage along the aisle was accompanied by a roar of sound, the tenor of which was doubtful. He still held the favor of some of the crowd, but there were others who harbored no love for Johnny Mercer.

Once in the ring, the formalities were brief. A couple of guys were introduced to the crowd; then Johnny and Prado rose and took dutiful bows. They were called to the middle of the ring, and Evans was working the fight tonight, too. He said, after the usual instructions, "And I don't want anything like that last mess." He looked at Johnny, and Johnny said, "You better write Gribbon a letter."

He went back to the corner and Healy took his robe off and said, "Stay away from him, Johnny." Then there was the bell and he walked out.

Prado wasted no time. He came in with his hands low, his chin tucked behind a heavy shoulder. He looked easy to hit, but Johnny knew better than that. He stabbed with the left and it glanced off Prado's head. Johnny slipped the return and hooked the left lightly. He went back, was closer to a corner than he had figured, and in an instant Prado was on him, both hands punching savagely. Johnny worked out of the hole into the center of the ring, and there was a tiny smear of blood at the corner of his mouth.

And this was the way it would be, he knew, until the thing was over. Prado would keep coming in, coming in. There would be no rest, no respite from this labor. The crowd had unloosed its great voice for the first time, and he knew he would hear it often, this night.

He went through the first, stabbing at Prado, trying to get the range. The man came forward always, the heavy menace of his hands immediate and deadly, the heavy chin hard to reach, the eyes heavy-lidded and searching.

He went back to his corner and Healy said, "You know it now. Stay out of the corners. Keep him in the open."

"If I had anything to do with it," Johnny said, "I'd have him kept in a cage." And he was only half joking. The man's deadliness was as real as the noises in the night.

The second and the third went by, and Johnny had been hurt. Prado had reached him with a left and a right, with fifteen seconds to go of the third, and the big lights had gone out for a moment. He had caught the man and clung close, and Prado had pounded his body with fierce intensity.

Healy said nothing. He worked silently and skillfully on a small cut over Johnny's left eye, and Benny Saxe, busy with a sponge, said: "He hits, eh, kid?"

Johnny nodded. It was the truth. A couple more shots like that would leave him on Queer Street. Prado had not been hurt, for Johnny hadn't been able to get a square crack at him.

He worked hard in the fourth. He let Prado come in, then blasted him with a right hand. It checked the guy for a moment, then he came forward again, his busy hands working. Johnny stepped to him, hooked the left solidly to the head and took two right hands in return. Prado could hit, and Prado could take a punch.

With thirty seconds to go of the round, he threw a right hand at Prado and missed, and found himself in trouble. The guy belted him twice, and when Johnny came inside, he was greeted quickly by the top of Prado's granite skull. He felt the skin split wide over the already injured eye, and the blood pumped out in a steady, heavy stream. He fought the man away and held him off until the bell.

In the corner, Healy and Saxe worked frantically. They stopped the bleeding, doped the cut efficiently. Johnny said, "You guys should have brought a sewing-machine. I think we might need one before the evening's out."

As they met at the start of the fifth, Prado grinned, showing his startlingly white teeth. He punched at the cut eye, and Johnny whipped a left hand into his face and went away.

The man followed, followed eternally, and Johnny's left hand was not sufficient barrier to stem such a forceful march. He overreached with the left hand once, and Prado was in close, punching with sinister strength and terrible speed. The cut opened again, and Johnny had but one good eye. He rocked Prado with a straight right hand, then suddenly found himself on his pants in a corner, Evans standing over him, shouting: "Five!"

He got to one knee and wondered where that one had come from. He could hardly hear Evans for the savage voice of the crowd, but he caught the "Nine" and came up. His legs were still strong under him, and he thanked those many hours on the road. Prado came to him on sliding feet, smooth and unhurried, and Johnny took two punches to the head before he could get away. He kept Prado at a distance for the rest of the round, peering through the red curtain that veiled his left eye. The sound of the bell was a welcome thing.

IT was good to rest. He sat on the stool, and Healy fixed the eye as well as possible, and Johnny thought things out. The sixth was coming up, and he could feel the rounds down in his legs. His eye was badly cut, he knew, and it was only a question of time before Prado would get to him again. He could not hold this man off for ten more rounds and inflict enough damage to do himself any good. The guy was too hard to hurt. In another day it might have been a different matter, but Johnny knew his legs would begin to go in another round or two, and from then on it would be murder. His style was truly classic, but it had been founded on the strength in his legs, the energy rampant in a young body. Conditions had changed slightly. The style would have to change. He conceded to him-

self that as things went, this was Prado's fight. It wasn't yet, but it would be. And there was no sense in that. If he held Prado off, yet was outpointed, the financial result would be the same as if he walked in there and got dumped. And when a man walked into trouble, anything could happen.

So just before he went out for the sixth, he told Healy, "Call a couple of doctors, Tim. I'm out for no good."

HE went to meet Prado; he was lower, now, his hands ready for the punching. He met the Mexican in mid-ring, and wiped the slightly surprised expression from the man's face with a whistling left hook. Prado hunched his shoulder a bit higher and came into trouble.

Down off his toes, now, Johnny was a puncher. He had been around a long time, and this was not the first occasion on which he had fought this way. He slipped a hook and drove his right to the body, and there was satisfaction in the impact. He straightened Prado with a left hand and clubbed him with the right, twice, and the man shook his head and came back for more. The crowd was roaring steadily, now, for they knew they were witnessing a legalized murder.

The pace was fast, the going tough, and Johnny wondered how long he could keep it up. He was smarter than Prado, moved easier in this new medium, but he would take a licking, he knew, no matter what happened. It was the tough way to fight this guy, but it seemed to be the only way when you didn't have too many apples left in the basket.

They were in the middle of the ring, and Johnny had just taken a hard punch high on the head when the bell rang. He found his corner on shaky legs.

Healy mopped at his face and said, "I hope you know what you're doing. You can't go another two rounds like that."

Johnny asked: "Can Prado?" And it was the big question, to which he had to find an answer very soon. . . .

They went through the seventh and into the eighth, and Johnny knew his strength was nearly spent. With a minute left to go of the round, Prado dropped him for the second time. He saw the punches coming. A left hook rocked him, and Prado drilled him with a right. It was right on the target, and Johnny went down in the angle of the ropes. Prado hit him three more times as he fell.

He made it up at "eight," and sought refuge in the center of the hurricane that hit him. Prado punched and tried to butt, but Johnny backhanded him savagely across the mouth and the man spat out a tooth. They broke and Prado came in, and Johnny checked him with a full right hand at the bell.

It would be the last round, he knew, as he waited to go out for the ninth. He didn't have another one in him. He said to Healy, "The guy has a head like a block of cement. I've hit him a hundred times. He ought to fall once, just to be polite."

Healy said nothing, for he was too busy. Johnny's face needed a lot of attention.

The bell brought them out for the ninth, and Johnny stepped forward, hitching his trunks. Prado came to meet him, and Johnny stepped forward and threw the right hand down the line. He felt the shock deep in the muscles of his back, and he stepped away, waiting for Prado to fall. The man shook his head slowly and came sliding forward.

Johnny spent it all, then. He reached deep into his reservoir of strength and brought up all the pennies. He laid them on the line and knew there just weren't any more. He brought the fight to Prado, hooking him solidly with the left, clubbing the right.

Prado jounced him with a heavy left, and they traded rights in Prado's corner. Johnny stepped away and banged him with the right again, and he was the most surprised person in the house when Prado stumbled and fell to his knees. Johnny walked to another corner on rubber legs and leaned against the ropes. He drew the night air into his lungs deeply, trying to drive out some of the fatigue that gripped him. He looked for Prado, and his heart fell when he saw that the man was on his feet. Evans wiped off the Mexican's gloves and the guy came forward. Johnny doubted that the count had gone beyond "two." This was one hell of a gent he was fighting. He really needed a rifle.

Prado came to him, and Johnny took a heavy left hand high on the head. He hooked at Prado and missed, then banged him with the right. He hooked the left viciously, felt the impact, and clubbed the guy twice with the right. Prado went down again. On his face, this time.

The count went to "eight," for which Johnny was grateful. He watched the man on the floor, feeling that if he got up, the thing was over, for he wouldn't be able to put him down again. But Prado got up. He got up and came in, and Johnny threw the last punch of the night, a left hook that had all the pitiful remainder of his strength.

It was enough. Prado went down, face forward, and he stayed there. Evans could have counted to a thousand. The man didn't move. . . .

It was fine to be in the dressing-room, standing under the shower. The hot water soaked some of the pain out of him, and he joyously let it play over his body. He turned on the cold, after a time, and in a little while it seemed that he would live, after all. He dried off and Healy gave him a swift rub. Healy shook his head and said, "I thought I'd seen everything. I saw you fight like that one night about ten years ago, in Chicago. Ten years is a long time."

Johnny nodded happily. "That last round took about ten years." It was an evening for laughter. He had so much money he didn't know what to do. Jennie and the kids could buy themselves gold-plated shoes.

He was just putting on his tie when someone rapped on the door. Healy opened it and Johnny heard someone say, "Is he decent? Still in one piece?"

MARGE was beautiful tonight. Johnny looked at her and his heart bounced. She said, "You were good. There was fight in the old boy yet. No one ever really extended that bum."

Johnny said, "Do not call that fire hydrant a bum." His hands were very sore. He grinned. "Tonight we made a lot of dough."

Marge nodded. "I got two and a half to one. A thousand dollars' worth."

He stared at her. "You bet on me?"

It was nice to hear her say, "Certainly. I'm a smart gal. I always follow a winner."

"Tomorrow we go shopping—for a fur coat. I'm wealthy," Johnny said.

Marge looked at him. "There's something else you can buy me."

Prado had punched hard, but not hard enough so that he couldn't think. He nodded. "A ring."

Marge took his arm, "Such a smart man. Always the right answer. A few years behind schedule, but his intentions are good."

"The best," Johnny said. "The very best."

Solution to Crossword Puzzle on page 65

■	W	A	I	T	E	R	■	S	L	U	S	H
S	A	L	V	A	G	E	■	C	A	M	P	U	S
U	R	G	I	N	G	S	■	A	S	S	U	M	E
G	R	E	E	K	■	C	A	R	T	■	M	A	C
A	I	R	S	■	M	U	L	E	■	V	E	N	T
R	O	I	■	F	E	E	T	■	A	I	D	E	S
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G	E	L	I	D	■	E	F	T	S	■	L	U	G
A	L	I	T	■	M	A	U	I	■	C	A	R	O
L	O	B	■	M	O	L	L	■	G	A	I	T	S
A	P	I	C	E	S	■	C	H	A	B	L	I	S
S	E	D	A	T	E	■	R	E	L	I	E	V	E
■	R	O	B	E	S	■	A	M	E	N	D	E	■

Small Hero

MAYBE, thought Mac, he shouldn't have wielded the chair. But then, he was only five feet five, and the Siberian topped him by nine inches. The man was half-drunk, and for no better reason than that he had tripped over the little Sergeant's legs, had picked up a bottle, had been about to throw it—here, in the smoky crossroads tavern, far in the interior of Iran, where the men of Texas and Illinois met those of Moscow and Kiev, and turned over to them jeeps and bulldozers and other American war material, to be used by the Russians against the common enemy.

Usually the soldiers of the two nations got on well. Tonight, though, there had been this row between the Siberian and the Sergeant. Now the former lay moaning on the ground. Already Americans and Russians were taking sides; and there was the promise of a free-for-all when Mac decided it was up to him.

Bending over the prone man, he played the good Samaritan with a glass of vodka. He said—that being all the Russian he knew:

"*Tovarich*—comrade!"

The other jumped up. At once, in true Slav fashion, he threw an affectionate arm about the Sergeant's neck and bestowed a smacking kiss upon his lips.

"Vodka for everybody!" he shouted.

So Hamdi Yar, the Afghan who owned the tavern, got busy. Here—the Prophet Mohammed be praised indeed!—was lucrative business, with Americans and Russians vying as to which should buy more drinks.

And when, presently, things looked like the beginning of another quarrel—with Mac saying, a little tearfully, that he shouldn't have used the chair, and the Siberian declaring, just as tearfully, in broken English, that he shouldn't have threatened his friend, his dear, dear friend, with a bottle—when they argued ever more heatedly as to who was to blame and almost came to blows, Hamdi Yar interfered.

"Listen!" he exclaimed.

There was silence. And taking his seat on the platform at the end of the room whence he could keep a wary eye on his customers, he announced that he wasn't sure who, American or

The first of a gaudy group of stories, a sort of 1944 Persian Nights Entertainments, told by a picturesque old ruffian on the road north from the Persian Gulf, to the American soldiers who spend the night at his caravansary on the way to Russia.

by Achmed Abdullah

Russian, was right in this particular instance; but as a general rule, it was proper for the smaller of two men to strike the first blow, and strike hard.

Such, said Hamdi Yar, was ever the course of wisdom, and it reminded him of something that had happened some years ago, when, on an evening, in the garden that surrounded the palace of the Amir of Afghanistan, there was a boy whispering soft words of love to a girl, and the girl stamping her foot in a style that betokened temper and replying:

"Empty words, Nazir! For—my own shame that I must tell you so!—if you loved me truly, there would be soon the priest to make us man and wife."

"We cannot marry," he rejoined. "At least, not yet."

"Oh—"

"Your family and mine are enemies, have been enemies for centuries. You are a hostage here at my father's palace. And my father has the power, while I am helpless."

"More empty words!"

"I'm telling you facts."

"Then why not change the facts?"

"How would *you* change them, Fathma?"

"I would do—oh—*some*thing," was her unreasonable and thoroughly feminine answer. Then, as Nazir was about to take her in his arms, she shook her head. "I shall not let you kiss me. Our people, as you say, are enemies." And she turned on her heel and entered the palace.

NOW this happened just before curfew; half an hour later a loud knocking was heard at the western gate of this city of Kabul, a strident clamoring for admittance, and at once the soldiers of the night watch streaked out of the guardhouse.

A visitor at this late hour? They wondered who it might be, since the use of the western gate, the Gate of the Father of Lions, was the exclusive privilege of notable foreigners and powerful Afghan lords.

"Perhaps," suggested a sergeant, "a British envoy?"

"Or a Russian?"

"Or, belike, the Khan of Bokhara sending a threat of war?"

"Hardly so. His only daughter—do not forget—is hostage here at the Amir's court."

By this time, with the knocking ever more insistent, they were unbolting the enormous double door of teakwood and iron. They threw it open—and were disappointed, even angry. For they beheld no glittering cavalcade, no haughty Christian or haughtier Moslem grandee with a shimmering retinue of servants in scarlet and gold; beheld, instead, a single man, clad in torn, travel-stained homespun, and astride a shaggy pony.

Very small he was, rosy-cheeked, round-faced, no more than twenty years of age. Yet giving the lie to his youth and size was the long straight blade that rode at his hip. Giving the lie, too, was his loud, blustering voice as he declared that he was a lad of short temper and long thirst, and went on:

"So lead the way to the nearest inn, O sons of Adam, and make sure it be a good one, since I am a man of fastidious taste!"

He dismounted. He stood there, cocking a chilly, challenging eye at the soldiers and the riffraff of townspeople who had hurried up on hearing the commotion, and he was about to cross the threshold, when the captain of the guard stopped him with curt words:

"Wait, O creature! The eastern gate for your kind, not the western."

"What's that?"

"Only a great gentleman is permitted to pass here."

"And who—by the red pig's bristles!—dares say that I am not a great gentleman?"

"The spots on your cloak, for one thing, and the sorry rents in your breeches."

"Clothes can lie. Blood cannot. Why, I have been assured that my fine breeding would show in my bearing should I stand mother-naked on village commons or marketplace."

"Very well." The grizzled old captain smiled at the youth's arrogance. "You are a great gentleman, to avoid argument. But—a great gentleman of what name?"

"Hassan," was the prompt reply.

"Hm—who is *not* called Hassan in Islam? Which fish is not called fish? Therefore tell me—a great gentleman of which nation and tribe? And what about this great gentleman's whence and whither?"

"You annoy me!" cried the other, advancing threateningly. "And permit me to inform you, the last man who annoyed me, I cut off his ears and fed them to a mangy dog, causing the poor brute to die of poison."

Seriously he said it; frowned as there was ringing laughter, and from the crowd, two men advanced.

One was well over six feet tall, armed with sword and three daggers, a scarlet turban on his bullet-shaped head; and scarlet, too, the long loose cloak about his wide shoulders. The other was clad completely in a merchant's sober black, and his turban was so large that it shadowed his bearded features to a vague blur.

"Who laughed," demanded Hassan sharply, "and at whom?"

"I laughed," replied the scarlet one, "and at you. And what have you to say to that, O wart on the nose of creation?"

"Merely a word of warning. Not to laugh again. Or else—"

"I love thy, *'Or else.' Wah*—I wish your sort were sold in the bazaars. And I would order me a couple to cheer me through the dreary winter."

HASSAN grew pale with rage. He stepped forward, toward the big man, and drew himself up, though the top of his head just about grazed his opponent's chin.

"What shall it be?" he demanded. "Bright steel—or wrestling body to body?"

The other was amused.

"Run along, cockroach!" he advised. "I cannot quarrel with a beardless boy who has never known a razor blade."

"I," came the heated rejoinder, "was the tough warrior before you were weaned."

Once more the scarlet one laughed. But laughter changed to a yelp of pain, as suddenly Hassan reached up and savagely tweaked his nose.

"This," he shouted, "is too much."

He whispered a few words to the man in black, who inclined his head. Then he said to Hassan:

"I cannot cross steel with children. So let it be wrestling. And presently, you will be across my knees, and the flat of my hand well tanning your cunning little buttocks."

He dropped his weapons, removed his cloak. There was the dramatic appearance of an immense, hairy torso, bare but for a loincloth, a little stout around the middle with good living, of legs like oaks and arms like columns of granite.

Hassan dropped his sword too. He removed tunic and shirt; stood there, small and thin.

People smiled. So did the big man. There was no malevolence in him as he looked at Hassan and remarked:

"Lead the way to the nearest inn, O sons of Adam, and make

"No, no! I do not care to wrestle with you. An elephant—wrestling with a flea!"

"Is the elephant afraid?" demanded Hassan.

The onlookers roared with mirth.

"A reckless lad, this small one!" commented one.

"Ah," said another, "the wee, sweet sound the breaking of his neck will be!"

The scarlet one turned on the last speaker.

"Be quiet!" he cried. "This is a brave youth." And, gently, to Hassan: "I shall not hurt you much."

He moved forward with a shambling gait. Then he crouched. His hands jerked out like the paws of a bear, trying to draw his opponent into a crushing embrace.

It was the Afghan style of wrestling, with no forbidden holds, no fouls of any sort. Smashing fist, kicking foot, biting teeth—all was permitted.

Hassan leaped quickly sidewise. He fell flat on his back, lay there as if motionless with fear—and again the crowd laughed, as did the big man. Why, he thought, it would be over in a moment. He would grab Hassan and smash him on the hard earth until he fainted or squealed for mercy. But as, absolutely sure of himself and forgetful of his defences, he reached down slowly—too slowly—suddenly, shrewdly, Hassan curved his back, straightened his legs, sending them with full force into the other's comfortable middle.

The man sailed up and out. His head struck a brick wall. He collapsed. He had hardly enough breath left for what he had to do before—so he imagined but was mistaken—he died: to cry out, in a kind of admiring, melancholy wonder: "My grief, little man, that I thought you a braggart!" and to beg the man in black who had hurried up: "Look

sure it be a good one, since I am a man of fastidious taste!"

after my four wives and seven concubines, will you?" and, with a final groan, to commend his soul to Allah the Merciful, King of the Day of Judgment.

Then there was silence. A shudder passed over the crowd like a chilly wind. The captain of the guard pushed Hassan toward the gate.

"Mount your horse," he said, "and ride swiftly away from here."

"Why should I?"

"Because the man with whom you wrestled is Tugluk Othman."

"And who may *he* be?"

At this moment the scarlet one, who had decided he wasn't going to die after all, jumped up. He threw his cloak about him, stood there majestic and haughty.

"I'll tell you who I am!" he shouted indignantly. "Hired hero I am to His Majesty the Amir of Afghanistan. His bravo and brawler I am, well paid with gold and high honors. His ready reckoner with steel I am when traitors' or rebels' accounts are cast up and added. His stanch champion I am—"

"You *were*. Are no longer."

"Eh?"

"Have I not defeated you tonight?"

"*Wah*—thanks to your nimble foot!"

"What about my nimble blade? Stand still, elephant! Lean against the gate!"

"But—"

"Do as I tell you!"

A second later Hassan picked up his sword, shot it whirling through the air. Passing, at a distance of fifty paces, between the other's left arm and chest, missing both by the merest fraction of an inch, it pierced the folds of the loose cloak and nailed the man against the gate.

"This," announced Hassan, rather smugly, "is what I call swordsmanship. It is I who am champion, not you, Tugluk Othman! And thus, by Allah, am I ready and willing to take your place, to offer my skill and strength to the Amir—"

"And he accepts," interrupted the man in black.

He pushed back his turban, and at once the people salaamed as they beheld their sovereign lord. Nor were they unduly surprised, since it was known that Abderrahman, the Amir, often wandered about the city on an evening, disguised as a simple citizen, to talk with noble and artisan, with merchant and priest and roustabout—to hear what he might hear and find out what he might find out, for ever there were Russian intrigues to the north and British to the south, in India, and throughout Central Asia, were other rulers who wished him ill and were not above gilding treacherous hands.

He turned now to Tugluk Othman.

"You are getting to be too old," he told him, "and too fat. A suitable pension shall be yours."

Then he motioned to Hassan and led the way to the palace.

HE sighed as he recalled how, going for a ride earlier in the day, omens had gathered about him, thick and evil. For he had seen an old raven upon a broken tree, preening a ragged wing, had seen a one-eyed foreigner wearing a yellow cloak, had seen a wounded dog with seventeen vultures flopping to the feast—oh yes, omens of disaster, of death.

"And," he said to Hassan, "I do not like death nor strife. Peace is what I desire. But how can I have peace, with always knavery and dirty, sordid greed among my subjects, and always alien enemies beyond the border? Chiefly Musa Ferredji, the Khan of Bokhara! Ah,"—his shrill voice gave the lie to his fine talk about longing for peace—"cursed be he! Cursed be his brain, his bones, his blood!"

"You hate him?" asked Hassan, and his gray eyes narrowed.

"Does he not hate me, as my father hated his father and his grandfather hated my grandfather?"

"Why?"

"Hate is aye the best reason for hate—and for fear."

"How can you fear the Khan? Last year you vanquished him. And he cannot attack you, with his daughter your hostage."

"*Still* my hostage, you mean. He will surely try to free her, by stealth. Then, should he succeed, he will again invade my land." The Amir bowed his head. "There were, this morning, the dark, grim omens." He paused. "Perhaps—Allah grant it!—you are the golden omen, sent to me in my hour of need. Yes, a youth like you, keen and brave and crafty, to watch so that the Khan's daughter

may not be carried off from under my very nose."

"Would you trust me, a stranger?" Hassan said slowly.

"I would rather trust a stranger than many a friend. A stranger has less cause to wish me ill."

"Ugly wisdom!"

"The truth, since she wears no veil, is always ugly. Nor shall I demand that you swear fealty. For—here is another ugly truth—would a mere oath keep you from breaking faith if you felt so inclined?" The Amir smiled thinly. "Besides," he went on, "I like your looks. Honest you seem —and decent."

Hassan blushed faintly.

SO Hassan entered the service of the Amir. He became his hired hero and champion, his bravo and bully and brawler, with generous pay and high honors. And too, with fear and jealousy and rancor following him like a shadow—and obsequious salutations when he walked through streets and bazaars; great nobles and grave merchants salaaming deeply and purring words of flattery at the small man's red-robed, steel-crackling passing.

He had the free run of city and palace; and it was not long before he met Fathma, daughter of Musa Ferredji, Khan of Bokhara, and hostage to the Amir.

That was in the garden. She saw him and gave a start.

"Brother!" she cried excitedly.

"Hush!" was his warning. "Not your brother, but a swashbuckling stranger whom you do not know at all."

There was then a rush of whispered words.

He told her how he had defeated Tugluk Othman and had taken the latter's place—"the which is lucky for you and me, little sister."

And he explained why he had come.

Of late, it seemed, the Afghans, secure in the knowledge that, through Fathma being a hostage, her father's hands were tied, had shown their teeth more and more. They were frequently crossing the border, carrying off women and cattle and plundering caravans. The Khan had frequently written letters of complaint to the Amir, who had sent polite replies, each beginning with: *"Dearly beloved cousin."* But Abderrahman had done nothing to curb his subjects.

THE situation had become intolerable; something had to be done. First of all, Fathma had to be freed. And Hassan was here to attend to it.

"Nor," he added, "will it be hard, since I can come and go as I please. Before many nights you and I will be taking the road back to our own country."

He laughed triumphantly—was utterly amazed at her reply:

"I cannot leave Kabul."

"Why not?" Then, when she was silent, he shrewdly guessed the reason and asked: "A man, here in Kabul? An Afghan?"

"Look at me!" she cried. "Shallow, are we? Flighty and addlepated — all of us?"

"Whom I love!"—defiantly. "And who loves me."

"Impossible!" Hassan flared up. "An enemy, accursed and hated—"

"Hated by you, not by me. How can I hate him, since I love him?"

"Do you love him more than me, your father, your mother, your nation?"

"An unfair question!"

"An honest question! Is he dearer to you than your own flesh and blood?"

"Not dearer. But just as dear."

"Ah,"—in a rage—"wanton! Traitress! Who—who is he?"

"I'll not tell you."

"I'll find out—and kill him!"

"I'll warn him against you!"

"And thus announce to the people here who I am, and sacrifice mine, your brother's, life?"

She wept then; and Nazir, the Amir's firstborn, who happened to be strolling through the garden, hurried

Lunge! Thrust! Lunge!

The hilts clanked savagely. Feet slid, slithered, advanced, receded.

Lunge again—and counter-lunge!

A clank-clanking song of strife.

Perhaps a song of death?

Death, thought the Amir, who was passing through the garden on his morning stroll; who remembered how, a week or two ago, omens had gathered about him, evil and dark . . . . Death—to his firstborn son?

But no, the Lord be praised, he was mistaken!

up. He took her in his arms and faced Hassan furiously:

"Did you make her cry?"

Hassan answered by another query:

"Are you her lover?"

"I am! And—what is it to you?"

"A gross insult it is to me, and to you no less than sentence of death. For,"—suddenly, recklessly—"she is my sister, O Afghan, O eater of dirt!"

He drew his sword. So did Nazir. And while the girl stood there, sobbing, begging them to desist, steel spoke. Oh, yes—they loved her dearly, one with a lover's, the other with a brother's love. But just then hate was stronger than love, and so there was then, on this fine early morning, as grand a fight as one might come across anywhere.

Silver blades in the golden light!

Diamond blades in the rose-pink light!

For when Nazir saw his father, he laughed. Quickly lowering his weapon, he bowed to Hassan with a fencer's salute, meanwhile winking at him.

"A bully swordsman, this hired hero of yours," he told his father. "Here we have been crossing steel for the sport of it. And—oh, the tricks he taught me!"

The Amir embraced Hassan in an exuberance of relief.

"A robe of honor for you!" he cried. "Seven fat purses of gold! And the pick of the emeralds which I obtained recently! Emeralds which," he added with a smile, "my soldiers found, the

other day, in a caravan belonging to the Khan of Bokhara—may his beard be disgraced!"

And again Nazir laughed, while Hassan changed an angry exclamation into a cough. . . .

On that same day Hassan went to Nazir's apartment and salaamed.

"One word from you," he said, "and even now, the executioner would be wiping my neck's blood from his ax. You saved my life. I am grateful to you."

"And I to you."

"How so?"

"You do not know my father's lashing tongue, his black, ruthless rages.. Had you let on that I am in love with your sister, with a girl of Bokhara—*ai-yai-yai!*" Nazir shuddered.

The two youths' eyes met. Then, slowly, their hands met, clasped; and Nazir went on:

"Too bad that we must be enemies. Else we might be such true friends. You see—I like you fine."

"As I like you."

They were silent. Nazir sighed.

"You are unhappy?" asked Hassan.

"I am."

"Because of my sister?"

"Yes. We love one another, your sister and I. But seeing who she is and who I am, she a Bokharan and I an Afghan, she can never be mine. And so—"

"Forget her! Speaking now as friend to friend—forget her!"

"How can I, O great fool?"

"It is you who are the fool. Why," —negligently—"she is only a woman."

"You"—Nazir was indignant—"you said *only* a—"

"Just so. For, upon my word, I have never yet found a single one of

Hate was stronger than love; so there was as grand a fight as one might come across anywhere. Lunge! Thrust! Lunge!

her sex worth breaking my heart for, nor losing a night's sleep."

"You don't know women."

"I know plenty. Know, by the same token, that they are all alike, shallow, flighty, addlepated—"

And then, from the threshold, a voice cut in:

"Oh—is that so?"

A girl entered. She closed the door behind her.

"Listen to the little man!" she continued. "The wise, wise little man who knows everything!"

Nazir was amused. He turned.

"Ayesha!" he said. "Sister! Have you been eavesdropping?"

She paid no attention to him, but walked up to Hassan and took off her face veil.

"Look at me!" she cried. "Ah—look straight at me! Shallow, are we, all of us? Flighty and addlepated—all of us—all of us?"

Now, of course, Hassan should have been embarrassed. But he was not.

He smiled, replied slowly:

"Well, not all. There is, perhaps, an exception."

"And who"—heatedly—"might this exception be? The girl, I suppose,"—with sharp irony,—"the lucky, lucky girl whom, some day, you will honor with your love?"

He stared at her. Sloe-eyed he saw her, apple-cheeked, with a ripening to her bosom and a rich red curve to her lips. His smile widened, and he said:

"You are so right."

He kept on staring; she continued:

"Tell me, little man, what must this lucky, lucky girl be like to deserve the singular honor of being loved by you?"

For a while he was silent, and a curious thing happened to him. For he thought that here, in this girl, was something that made him shiver and grow weak as if with some unknown expectation; that life without her would be worthless, useless. When once more Ayesha demanded, "This lucky, lucky girl—what must she be like?" he said in a low voice:

"She must be your height and size, and with the same color of hair. Listen! Meet me tonight near the rose bower—and I shall tell you the rest."

And he added:

"If you cannot find the way, maybe your brother will show it to you. For he too has urgent business there."

THERE was, shortly after sundown, much giggling and gossiping among the women who sat on the balcony of the servants' quarters of the Amir's palace. For from the rose arbor below came a whispering of voices—four voices, soft and blurred—and Zahida, the stout pastry-cook, sighed and said sentimentally:

"Ah, this is the young year storming over the land, and mating-time is here. I too, once upon a time—"

"Allah," interrupted Myryam, who supervised the laundry, "what a memory!"

Laughter. Again the voices below; and Habeebah, the seamstress, remarked:

"I wonder who they are."

"Perhaps," suggested the mistress of the robes, "some stable-grooms and scullery-maids."

"Shall we sneak down and spy on them?"

"Would you have liked it if somebody had spied on you when your heart was young and with never a crack?"

"Ah"—as there was the unmistakable sound of a hearty kiss—"happy, happy children!"

And happy they were indeed, in the rose arbor, brother and sister and sister and brother. Happy, since theirs was the golden, glorious present. Less

happy, a few moments later, as they remembered the future—*and* the past. Past and future, so thickly intertwined. Past and future, with ever the same old feud, the same bitter enmity dividing Amir and Khan, the men of Afghanistan and the men of Bokhara; and never a chance, commented Hassan morosely, of their fathers permitting this double marriage which would spell peace for all time.

"Never peace!" agreed Nazir. "But always strife and bloodshed and hate."

"Men's hate," said Fathma. "Not women's."

"Hate," chimed in Ayesha, "for no reason at all."

A RAPID wink of understanding passed between girl and girl, and Fathma announced:

"No reason at all—except that men are wicked."

"And selfish—"

"And stupid—"

"Allah! How stupid!"

"We men," declared Hassan, "are *not* stupid!"

"Prove it that you are not!"

"Yes! Prove it!"

"How—how *can* we prove it?"

"By being less filled with selfishness—"

"And silly pride—"

"And black hate—"

There was then silence. And Hassan frowned as he thought of all the ancient wars between Afghans and Bokharans. . . . And to what end?

If Afghan raided and looted today, Bokharan raided and looted tomorrow. Yet were there not, South as well as North of the border, good crops, good rivers, good forests and—if people could but see the truth of it—good happiness for everybody? Thus why, then, must men always be out with sword and hate?

And he thought of the gallant, decent, kindly lads, Afghans and Bokharans, who had been killed in the past, because of this same hate. Nor had anybody ever profited by it; except, belike, the alien traders and infidels all, bless them not the Lord Allah!—who, after each war, trooped into the battle-scarred land, with packs on bent backs, to sell high and buy cheap.

He bit his lips. What had the girls said?

"Men are stupid."

Oh, so very, very stupid, to let senseless hate come into the path of love.

Still, what could they do, he and Nazir, against their father's stubborn, ruthless might?

Then, all at once, a notion came to him, and he laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" demanded Fathma.

"Because I have the answer. A shrewd answer—to stupid strength: Let us ride away from here tonight, the four of us."

"Where to?" was Ayesha's excited question."

"I know a place near the Bokharan border where—"

"The border," argued Nazir, "is too near. Nor is it safe. My father will ride on our trail."

"So, if my plan succeeds, will *my* father. Let them both come!"

"But—"

"Listen to me!" said Hassan.

He explained what was in his mind. Again he laughed. So did the others. And, within the hour, they passed through the Gate of the Father of Lions; and when the captain of the guard saw Hassan and Nazir and saw two girls, with their faces thickly veiled, and heard them giggling, he thought them light women of the bazaars, and he sighed and said:

"I wish I were riding along with them. But how can I, since I have an elderly wife—a nagging, snooping, cantankerous scold of a wife with a mouth like a running tap?"

NOT many days later, a shepherd delivered a message at the palace of the Amir of Afghanistan, while a cameleer delivered a second message at the palace of the Khan of Bokhara. And if the former yelled to his captains: "Make ready for strife! For here this thrice-accursed scoundrel, the son of the low-born pig who calls himself Khan of Bokhara, has run away with my sweet daughter!" the other cried loudly to *his* captains: "We ride tonight, heroes! For here this son of the Afghan Amir, this loathsome grandson of a hyena and a she-devil, has stolen the apple of my eye!"

Thus it was boots and saddles and: *"Hai! Shumshere aloom! Hai! Shumshere bu dust!* Ho! Swords out! Ho! Swords in hand!"

Picked warriors it was, galloping from the South. Warriors, no less picked, galloping from the North. Afghans and Bokharans. And they meeting, early one morning, at the foot of a rocky hill in the heart of the Darrah Yousseff range that was topped by an avalanche of square granite blocks and bold masonry—a castle that had been built, centuries earlier, by copper-faced Tartar freebooters who had conquered the land from Persia all the way to the brittle Mongolian steppes.

Today the castle was storm-tossed and in ruins. But some of the bastions were still stout enough, and in back of them crouched four young people, and they tittered and nudged each other as they saw and heard what was going on below.

Amir and Khan down below, each backed by his ruffianly soldiers. Amir and Khan coming face to face, glaring at one another and swapping salty invective:

"O camel-spawn!"

"O drunkard!"

"Your son—*wah*—the twin-brother to a toad—to elope with my Fathma!"

"Your son—*wah, wah*—the carrion-bloated jackal—to elope with my Ayesha!"

"Death to your son!"

"Red death to yours!"

And, already, Khan and Amir had drawn steel. Already, followed by their retainers, they were beginning to climb the trail that led to the ruined castle, when a clear young voice called out:

"Stop!"

They looked up, saw Hassan.

"If one of you," he went on, "kills one of us, the other one of you will kill the other one of us. And that—by Allah!—would be a foolish trade with profit to neither."

There was silence.

THEN an Afghan soldier laughed. So did a Bokharan soldier. Ah—here was a gorgeous jest, on Khan as well as on Amir!

Laughter became general. And, suddenly, the Amir joined in it. *"Ahee!"* he screamed, slapping his thigh—and the Khan's loud mirth was not far behind.

They laughed until they were exhausted—and then the Amir said:

"Here are four disobedient children—"

"Gravely disgracing our beards—"

"They should be severely punished—"

"But how?"

"Let them marry!" cried a hard-bitten old sergeant. "Ah," he sighed—"I marry frequently—and as frequently, regret it!"

And then, again there was laughter. Laughter that gurgled, choked, grew; it seemed to shake the trees and rocks; it reverberated across the hills and far into the Central Asian steppes.

Answers to "A Guy Named Joe" appearing on page 49

(1) *McCarthy,* Yankees' manager. (2) *Louis,* world heavyweight champ. (3) *Tinker.* (4) *Jeannette.* (5) *Cronin,* Boston Red Sox pilot. (6) *Walcott.* (7) *Dugan.* (8) *Savoldi.* (9) *Gordon.* (10) *DiMaggio.* (11) *Kirkwood.* (12) *Humphries,* Garden announcer. (13) *Burk.* (14) *Chroynski.* (15) *Wood.* (16) *Kuhel.* (17) *Jacobs,* Schmeling's manager (18) *Rice.* (19) *Medwick.* (20) *Jackson.*

A story that runs counterclockwise from 1944 Italy to the first century B.C. in Gaul—and back again.

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

The Gods Do Not Forget

TWO men sat in the garden of a Roman villa, beside a table littered with maps They were not ordinary men, as the stars on their tunics testified; Italy, half the world, was at their beck and call. They could afford a moment of relaxation, for word had just come that Paris was free at last, that Florence was safely occupied, that the Nazi horde was broken and crumbling on all fronts. Both men were Americans; one had flown from London to confer with the leader in Italy.

In this relaxed moment they were speaking, not of war, but of a hilltop laboratory just north of Rome, occupied by American scientists.

"These fellows Cosgrave and Lundgren," said the visitor from London, "are by all accounts absolute wizards! What they've done for us in the field of electronics, radar and so forth, is beyond belief. Give 'em everything they want. They may stop the damned buzz-bombs yet. I hear some queer yarns about their experiments."

"Yes," said the other. "All true, too, I believe. Would you care to see something of their magic?"

"Hm! Been thinking about that. Wonder if they could help with our immediate problems up north?"

"What problem, for instance?"

"The one that worries all hands."

"Oh." The commander in Italy frowned. "*That.*" He reached out and picked up an extension telephone. "Hello! Try and get hold of either Lieutenant-Commander Cosgrave or Lundgren, at their laboratory outside the city. It's on the Army phone list."

He set down the receiver and nodded to his visitor.

"We know," the latter said, "that it'll be their V-3 weapon. Intelligence finds that poison gas in enormous quantity is being produced at Linz and other places in Austria, and that they plan to use it as a desperate expedient against our concentration bases. Not as a military weapon, merely in the mad-dog desire to effect all the destruction possible before they themselves are destroyed."

"Well, we're ready for them."

The visitor sighed. "Yes. We're ready, all right; but it'll be blazing hell while it lasts! It's our boys I'm thinking about. We've not been able to bomb out those gas factories with success. There's the temptation to give 'em all we have, dump the gas on them—"

The phone rang.

At the other end, Cosgrave listened to what was said, his eyes seeking Lundgren in perplexity.

"I don't know, sir," he replied. "Chemical warfare isn't our branch. Oh—that experiment of ours, eh? Frankly, I can't see where it would effect anything; we have to take what comes. We're not able to pull in anything we want."

"I understand," crackled the General's voice. "I think he'd like to see the show, anyhow. One never knows where a useful hint might be picked up."

"Very well; we'd be glad to do what we can," said Cosgrave. "But there isn't likely to be any parallel between present-day problems and what happened centuries ago. This thing of ours may reach pretty far back."

"Can its effects, or whatever you call 'em, extend to France or Germany?"

"I fancy so, sir. We haven't tried." Cosgrave swallowed hard. "Very well.

Tonight? Certainly. Set your own time, sir."

He hung up and turned to Lundgren, wiping sweat from his face. It was a warm August day, but the sweat came not from heat alone. Cosgrave was deeply worried and said so.

Lundgren heard his report of the conversation, his lean dark face set in a thoughtful frown. Curiosity on the part of the visitor from London, of course, must be satisfied; yet there might be something in the idea.

"No telling where some useful hint might come from," he said. "A child's toy might suggest a new element in warfare; our tanks were invented in the Middle Ages, remember. A cartoonist has explained the molecule, atom and electron with a lucidity no scientist can attain. Suppose we give 'em the works. Might use those queer German tubes the Krauts left behind when they cleared out, and see what turns up."

"All right by me," said Cosgrave, with a shrug. "But you'd better meet the party tonight and disclaim responsibility. Lord knows what may happen! He wanted us to try to pick up France or Germany."

"Okay, John, shoot the works. Use these Heinie tubes," said Lundgren, smiling as he spoke, "and whisper in the electronic ear that we want Germany. What do they take us for, anyway—wizards of the dark ages?"

"I wish we were—then we'd have been able to provide an answer to those devilish robots," said Cosgrave. "But we seem to have failed there; and what can we do regarding poison gas, about which we know nothing? Still, as you say, there may be some hint given."

He had no hope of any such result.

THE guests who sat in the laboratory chamber that evening were only four—the two Generals with their personal aides. One wall was occupied by the wide screen. Cosgrave had hooked up their experimental apparatus and sat at the controls, while his friend and co-worker talked with the guests.

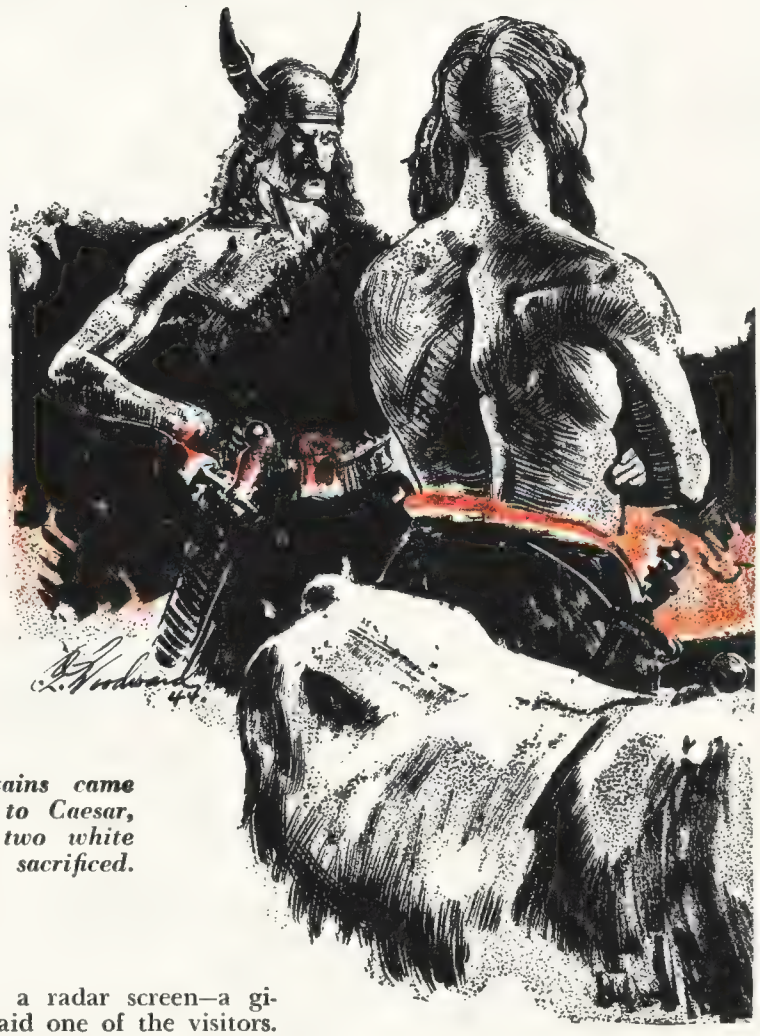
"You must understand," Lundgren said, "that this rather startling happening came during our experiments. We've neither developed it nor explored it; we've been too busy with actual warfare problems. It goes far beyond radar, into untouched fields of electronics, of supersonic vibrations, of unseen and unknown waves reaching from stellar space, of theory beyond known science. All this is just so much patter to you; I can't help it. We know no more."

"As I understand it," said the London visitor, "your discovery enables you to bring the remote past back to life and sound?"

"We don't do anything," put in Cosgrave. "It's done for us, sir. Don't ask us how. Our guess is that it's a reassemblage from the ether, of light and sound frequencies scattered ages ago and lost."

("That," he said to himself, "will give 'em something to chew on, and for all we know it's the God's truth!")

The instruments hummed, blue sparks leaped on the panels, the enormous bulging tubes warmed their fat mica diaphragms. Colors, all sorts of colors, shifted about the screen in a luminous fantasy of vague hues.



The chieftains came with gifts to Caesar, and with two white oxen to be sacrificed.

"Looks like a radar screen—a gigantic one," said one of the visitors.

"Yes," assented Lundgren. "But radar sends out waves that bounce back. We pull in waves, or oscillations, long since disintegrated."

Voices buzzed in discussion, then died out. Something was happening on the screen; a shadowy picture was taking shape. The screen itself did not vanish as usual. The play of colors continued, but against these colors, or rather within them, rose the picture of the standard of a Roman legion, with its legend *S.P.Q.R.*, or *Roman Senate and People*, topped by its golden eagle. It rose and fell, moved about, then steadied; it was being held by a man in armor, a Roman soldier clear-cut and distinct in every line.

"Hail, Caesar!" he said ringingly. "The Germans are advancing!"

The figure blurred and melted away. Another took its place—shadowy, and remaining indistinct, only half visible. Those Kraut tubes must be responsible, thought Cosgrave angrily; the usual results were missing this time. The shadowy figure spoke but the words were lost.

Only the voice itself could be heard, a voice thin but musical, a penetrating voice that reached into the hearer with its peculiar quality. Then it cleared and words came.

"So the Germans have crossed the Rhine?" it said. "How many—four hundred thousand and more, you say? Let them perish like all invaders. None of them shall return, none!"

Cosgrave had never heard a voice just like it—a man's voice, both beautiful and terrible. It broke into a laugh, a cruel and cynical laugh that died out and vanished with the shadowy figure. Germans? What Germans were being discussed?

The mobile colors on the screen shivered and ran all together like water, then were split asunder in the center, rolling back. The screen seemed to

But the gods of Rome were to have greater sacrifice than this.

roll with them; ah, now the thing was beginning to act properly! Into sight came the sharply defined shape of a young man, bare-headed but wearing a Roman corselet. His features showed vigor and alert strength.

"Looks like bad news, Caesar!" he said, though no one else was visible. "These German barbarians have rolled across the Rhine in a torrent and are advancing to the Meuse. They've come out of the northern forests to eat up the world, they say!"

"And what do you say, Lucius Verus, commander of the Legion of the Larks?" asked that musical, unforgettable voice, though no speaker appeared.

The young man's head lifted a trifle as he replied.

"Where you lead, Caesar, I follow, and the Larks with me!" said he proudly.

"Then march to meet these Germans. The Tenth Legion is already breaking camp," came the command. "Join them with your men. Later, I shall give you command of all the Gallic cavalry. These Gauls hate the Germans bitterly. . . ."

The splendid, musical voice thinned and died away. The figure on the screen wavered, and once more the colors became a shifting, blending vagueness.

Caesar! Was it possible? Cosgrave felt himself quiver to the realization. His mind flipped back to school-days, to the "De Bello Gallico," to Julius Caesar's own story of those hard-fighting times in France—what was it, the Seventh Book? He was not sure. But he did recall vaguely how those tremendous German hordes had come marching down to the narrow tongue of land between the Rhine and the Meuse, and how Caesar had marched up to meet them there, with all Gaul ready to revolt behind him and cut him off from distant Rome.

HIS whole attention riveted on the screen; he saw figures taking shape again—two men sitting in a tent, evidently centurions or minor officers, both of them veterans, scarred and growling as they drank wine. They were apparently Gauls, not Romans.

"I don't understand it," said one, with a grunt. "Back at Rome, these brass hats around the General are vicious profligates. So was the General himself—it's no secret. Steeped in the worst debauchery, in the lowest vices. And here in the field, by Hercules, they do the impossible!"

The other man laughed. "That's the Roman aristocracy for you, Marcus. Caesar won't have anyone around him but men of the most reckless courage. Who are these fellows? Plancus, a lawyer—Balbus, a philosopher—Trebonius, a witty rascal—Curio, a vicious little devil with no more morals than Caesar himself—and so on. But they've one thing in common, and that's courage. I will say that Lucius Verus isn't a profligate, and he's brave enough. The Larks think the world of him."

"Oh, he's a good soldier," said the first. "But he's too decent for that crowd. What's going to happen when we corner those Germans?"

"Nothing. They don't want to fight," said the other. "They've offered to treat with Caesar. Can't trust those barbarians, though. They'd overwhelm us and Rome itself, if they once broke loose!"

"Aye. Ready to go down fighting, so long as they take us with them, I hear. Damned if I like it! I don't want to see those men of mine wiped out, just for the sake of killing a lot of lousy German barbarians."

The voices died, the figures faded, to Cosgrave's irritation. He twirled the dials slightly, but they still faded. The scene was gone. . . .

The shifting colors grouped, formed into dense masses; the screen darkened and then seemed to open up. As though it were a window, one looked through it upon a somber scene: The interior of a tent once more, this time at night. By the light of oil lamps, four men sat busily writing. A fifth man sat dictating rapidly, now to one of the four, now to another; but no sound was heard, no voice came. This fifth man was scrawny and partially bald, with sunken cheeks; yet his thin features were remarkable, and his head was magnificent—large, high-browed, curiously wide from front to back, the lines of the face eloquent of a strange-

"Not I, Caesar, but you, are the fool," snapped Lucius angrily. "The gods do not forget!"

ly vivid personality that was sly and rascally below the eyes and noble above them, but everywhere powerful and even grim.

With a gesture and an unheard remark he dismissed the secretaries, who gathered up their tablets and departed. Into the tent stepped Lucius Verus, commander of the Larks—that legion newly recruited here in Gaul, and so named from the tufts of hair above their helmets, suggesting the bird. His voice broke suddenly upon the silence.

"It is like sunset, Caesar; their campfires light up the whole horizon. Their main force is twelve miles distant, but the front lines are within plain sight."

"But the truce is in effect, Lucius," said the penetrating, musical voice, the voice one could never forget. "Did you caution our Gallic cavalry not to break it?"

"I did. They hate these Germans bitterly, but they'll obey."

"Naturally. Sit down, my son. Eat, drink, forget your troubles."

Lucius poured water from a pitcher on the table, and broke a piece from the loaf of bread beside it. He sat down, munching. He was half the age of Caesar, who smiled thinly upon him.

"When I was twenty-five, Lucius, I was just learning confidence in myself. I'm a good politician, but a pretty poor soldier."

"Just the contrary to the usual opinion of you, Caesar," said Lucius with a chuckle.

Caesar palmed his bald brow. "My son, we're in a bad fix. By the best accounts, those Germans number about four hundred thousand. We have a tenth of that number."

"All disciplined men against barbarians."

"Yes; but men we can't replace. A few trained legions, but all mercenary soldiers, allies, mostly Gauls, with a scattering of Romans. If it came to battle, we'd probably win—but at a price so terrible we'd no longer have an army. Those Germans can fight."

"As we've learned to our cost, Caesar."

"Quite true. Therefore they must not fight."

LUCIUS VERUS eyed his General in some surprise. Caesar read his look and smiled.

"The accomplished politician never gives his enemy a chance, Lucius; that is the first rule of success. Now, these Germans threaten us, all Gaul, even Rome itself. Let them obtain even a minor advantage over us, and what happens? Our army of allies falls to pieces and we are left with a few legions. Gaul rises in revolt behind us. We are cut off and destroyed. No help can reach us from anywhere. It's a bad fix to be in."

As Lucius very well knew, Caesar was thinking of himself. One such setback here in Gaul, and his career at Rome was finished; his enemies there were many and great. Victory in Gaul, however, would mean a triumph in Rome.

"We must give them no chance, no chance whatever," added Caesar musingly.

Lucius shrugged. "It's a truce. They don't want to fight; they want to occupy Gaul."

"I can't afford that. I've made Gaul a province of Rome. I don't want you to fail me, Lucius."

"I? Fail you?" Lucius regarded him in startled dismay. "Impossible, Caesar!"

"You have unfortunate ideals, my son," said Caesar in his benign yet cynical way. "A man pointed for success cannot afford to have morality or scruples of any sort. I should like to see you succeed, for you have qualities of greatness. Now, take that illegitimate son of mine, Marcus Brutus. He's tormented by ideals; in consequence, he'll never amount to anything. That pimply young grandnephew of mine, Octavian, on the contrary, should become great. He's utterly contemptible in every way, but has the faculty of betraying everyone and is completely amoral."

"You argue that a criminal can become a great man?"

"No. You misunderstand. To become great, a man must be an opportunist. Remember, this Rome of ours is the vilest city in the world; a man can only get ahead there by means of murder and treachery—kill the other fellow before he kills you, is the word!"

Lucius gulped down the cold water gloomily.

"That's true. You and your kinsman and lieutenant, Mark Antony, are the two most promising men in Rome—and the most unscrupulous."

Caesar laughed softly. He was, quite openly, a notably licentious man in an age of shameless license—so much so that his legions had a marching-song about their "old bald adulterer General" which was a precursor of the "Mademoiselle from Armentières" of a later day, and Caesar enjoyed it no less than they.

"If Antony were here now," he observed, "I'd not fear those Germans."

Lucius caught the implication. It nettled him, as he met the cold eyes and read the implied rebuke, and the merciless, reflective look.

"I am trying to educate you, my son, not to lecture you," went on Caesar.

"Have I ever failed to obey your orders, Caesar?"

"No. But you appear to dislike them at times. I do not relish the distaste of my lieutenants. Or is it imagination on my part?"

"Sheer imagination, Caesar," replied Lucius, knowing he lied. "I am a soldier. Your orders are my law."

"In that case your future is assured, and the gods smile upon you!" said Caesar cheerfully, his thin lips curving cynically. "Will you send Curio to me? I have certain dispositions of the troops to make. It is a very lucky thing these thick-headed Germans have let themselves be maneuvered into holding the ground they do."

Lucius departed, with the uneasy sensation of being oppressed by some crawling horror from which there was no escape. It was not an unusual sensation, among those who had intimate dealings with this politician whom the rabble of Rome had lifted from obscurity to the highest place in the state. The aristocracy hated Caesar bitterly, but feared him—and the rabble—even more bitterly.

As for Lucius, he now understood perfectly that he had just received an ultimatum; obey, or be kicked out. Obey what? Certain orders that would come his way in due time. The civil wars had reduced his family to the depths, and the army was not only his profession but his one hope in life.

The army was a profitable profession these days. So much loot had been taken in Gaul that Caesar sold gold by the pound weight in Rome, at less than its value; and his officers profited likewise. Money, glory, advancement—everything was in prospect for a friend of Caesar, and much more so for one of his favored lieutenant and staff officers. In Rome, marriage had fallen to the level of legalized adultery, but at a word from Caesar a rich marriage would restore the fallen fortunes of the Lucian house. In short, Lucius Verus was on the up-grade.

This campaign would make his fortune, in every way; both his and that of Caesar, provided it succeeded. Caesar had turned from shoddy politics to brilliant soldiering, and success in Gaul would bring Rome to his feet. But these Germans threatened everything. These two enormous hordes, rolling across the Rhine with their women and families and wagons and gods, had put Rome and Gaul into panic. They even put much of the army into panic; for though Caesar's legions had sublime faith in him, the Gallic cavalry and allies were ready to crack up at the first bad luck.

NEXT morning, Lucius had not forgotten his momentous evening interview. With a handful of the cavalry staff, he rode out to inspect the front lines, and tried vainly to comprehend Caesar's delight at the position of the Germans. That position looked absolutely impregnable.

Far as the eye could see, down the narrowing tongue of land that marked the confluence of the Rhine and the Meuse, stretched the vast wagon-camp, protected by the floods from attack on either side. Across the front were no entrenchments. These savage warriors were confident in their manpower, and might well be so. They were led by shrewd and capable chieftains.

Lucius and his staff rode close to the German lines. The huge barbarians were sprawled among wagons and women and children; they waved to the party, shouted greetings, hurled insults at the Gauls and jests at the Romans, confident in the truce that had been made. They despised the Gauls, who hated them bitterly in return, but wanted peace with Rome.

In his own front lines, Lucius found the Gallic cavalry under review by Caesar and Decimus Brutus, his chief aide. Joining them, Lucius returned to the camp of the legions in time for lunch. He foresaw what was coming, by the gayety and carefree manner of the General; and when Caesar caught his eye and beckoned, after the meal, he knew the moment was at hand.

"My son, we are in need of a skirmish," said the General familiarly. "Suppose you take five troops of our cavalry and lead them along the German lines, and don't repress their tendency to exchange insults with the Germans. Don't ride in one party, but in small groups, and when the Germans attack, fall back."

"So you want to tempt them to break the truce, Caesar?" asked Lucius, smiling.

"The gods forbid, my son!" returned the older man. "I'll see to it that our troops are kept under strict control. You should not lose more than a hundred men or so—fall back, remember, under the attack."

A clap on the shoulder, and Lucius strode off on his mission—a mission that left him bewildered. No general conflict was to be waged. He was to lose a hundred men—but why?

The cavalry group, fretted by inaction, rode forth gladly, and at his word to the leaders, broke up into irregular parties, riding along the German front. In but a few moments the air was tense with shouts back and forth, threats, insults, braggadocio. A group of the Germans broke from the control of their leaders and came surging out to attack a dozen horsemen. Others from each side rushed to support their friends.

In no time at all, a neat little conflict was under way, the tall Germans slashing in among the horsemen with spear and sword. The Gauls, scattered and unable to maneuver, suffered heavily. Lucius rode among them, trying to halt the affray, sick at heart for his own duplicity. A German attacked him, and he cut the man down; a dozen surged up in his stead, and a spear-thrust dismounted Lucius, killing his horse. He caught another, mounted, and managed to draw off his men, while triumphant yells from the Germans followed them.

Mortified, shamed, Lucius rode to where Caesar and his staff were advancing, and joined them. From the German lines came out two of the chieftains. An interpreter shouted at them. They had broken the truce—did they wish war? Not at all, replied the Germans. Then let their chiefs come to Caesar in the morning and make explanations, said the Romans.

The Germans assented. The tumult was quieted, the wounded were brought in. Lucius joined Caesar.

"You got your wish," he said bitterly.

Caesar smiled his cynic smile.

"Aye, Lucius. Well done!"

The seething Gauls were calmed; to one leader here, another there, Caesar uttered a few words under his breath, cheers rose in his wake, astonishing Lucius and the rest of the staff alike.

"Come to me tonight, when the dictation is finished," said Caesar quietly, and Lucius assented.

An important thing, this dictation. The General was writing his memoirs of the Gallic campaigns for popular consumption at home, bringing to the Roman masses a comprehension of his military prowess. Here in his province of Gaul, Caesar was a king—but in Rome he was merely an *Imperator*, a General, with jealous enemies on every side. So, having cultivated an admirable style, he was making the most of it, to impress Rome with his shrewdness, leadership and popularity among the legions.

With Lucius, thought of his day's work rankled deeply. He was fully aware that Caesar favored him; he was aware too that he could lose this favor by one incautious speech or action. Caesar either trusted a man absolutely, or not at all.

His liking for Lucius Verus was almost paternal. Sons had been denied him; even the son whom all Rome knew to be his, Marcus Brutus, had turned against him and refused to admit the relationship. But this liking bestowed on the young officer might be changed in an instant to a chill dislike. A man with his way to make in the world, Lucius told himself, needed caution and wisdom as allies.

When Lucius appeared that evening the General was in a blandly jovial spirit.

"Welcome, my Achilles! I am proud of you."

"I am not," said Lucius.

"Which makes your action the more worthy. You liked the orders not, yet obeyed them; a true soldier, my son. Tomorrow you shall be the hinge on which shall turn your own fortune, that of Caesar, and that of Rome. Sit, relax, attend!"

Lucius obeyed, dreading what might come. Caesar was thoughtful, quiet, reflective, his keen analysis of the situation incisive and pitiless as a surgeon's knife.

Against these heavy-armed veterans the disorganized barbarians were helpless.

"There can be no conflict; once those barbarians form battle-ranks, we might win the day, but at a cost so terrible it would ruin us. We cannot recruit the ranks of our legions, of our cavalry. We need every man to quell the revolts that are rising in Gaul, and we need also the quality of terror in the Roman name. That is the prime fact; therefore we must avoid battle.

"But this horde of barbarians threatens Gaul and even Rome itself. Even if they settled here peacefully, their threat would remain; savages cannot be trusted. In Gaul I hope to build a greater Italy to support the outworn power of Rome. Therefore this barbaric power must be destroyed utterly, utterly! Do you realize the necessity, Lucius?"

"Yes, Caesar," responded the younger man. Caesar had not spoken of himself or of the army, only of the wider horizon. Now he went on, laying bare the crux of the matter.

"Those German chiefs are shrewd, bold, able rascals; without them, the horde is a herd of cattle. They hope to delude us with peace talk until their people can be firmly established in Gaul—then they can march on Rome at will. It is a crafty plan. These leaders are dangerous men. If the horde is to be destroyed, it must first be deprived of its leaders. After that, it is at our mercy."

Lucius nodded mechanically. True enough, but Caesar was talking too

much, was giving these Germans too much credit for shrewdness. They were a simple people in reality. Excuses—excuses for what? Caesar went on, with his thin, cynic smile.

"Now, my son, consider where these Germans are camped. Once their front line is broken in, whither can they retreat? Down the narrow neck of land, until the two rivers join; that is all—then into the water. Good! Tomorrow morning, have the entire cavalry contingent mounted and ready; take command of them. The legions will be moved out of the camp and to our front line. When the German chiefs come to consult with me, they'll be taken back to the camp and seized.

Illustrated by Cleveland Woodward

At the trumpet-signal, move out with the cavalry and hurl them straight into the German camp. Give orders to kill the women and children first; the barbarians will be frantic, leaderless, out of their wits. Drive them straight back. The legions will follow your cavalry—"

Lucius did not hear the rest; a red mist rolled across his brain as he comprehended everything this meant.

"You cannot! You cannot do this, Caesar!" he said.

"Why not, my son?" came the sharp query. Lucius looked up, met those penetrating eyes, and for a moment hesitated. Warning signals jangled in his brain. Nothing he could say would do the least good; the General was quite impervious to argument. Careful, careful! His own future was at stake, yes—staked upon this moment!

"It simmers down to this: An attack on the enemy camp under cover of truce," he said. "How will that look to Rome, to the Senate?"

"Oh! The Senate!" Caesar laughed softly. "That doddering old fool Cato will make a speech about Roman virtue and demand my punishment. No one will listen to him; no one ever does. The Senate will probably vote me a triumph. They are good practical fellows, those senators."

Lucius stared at him from a helpless, contorted face. He was not set upon virtue himself, but there were limits to vice. After all, he had a clean record. And this would mean more than just a smear on his record. Unless he shut up, he would be in for trouble. The favor of Caesar meant everything to him; he would be a fool if he jeopardized this favor. . . . Then he stiffened slightly.

"But the dishonor of it! The treachery!" he blurted.

"There's no dishonor except in failure. Come, collect yourself; here's a bitter necessity. To let our own brave fellows be killed by the thousand, would be treachery indeed—to them. A general must avoid that. Hit the enemy and do it first! Hit him with everything you have! Hit him when he least expects it! That's the art of war; never give him a chance. That's the essential thing here."

LUCIUS stood up suddenly. The agonized tension snapped. He had come to decision, and spoke it bluntly.

"Caesar, I cannot do this thing. My ancestors, my fathers, were honorable men. I am a Roman; that means something to me. What you propose is a despicable action."

Caesar laughed again, but his eyes were like steel.

"You talk like that blithering idiot Cato! What Caesar does, is right."

"What Caesar does, may be successful," countered Lucius. "The gods remain to judge if it be right."

"The very prating of Cato, of Marcus Brutus the addled philosopher!" sneered the older man. "Is it possible you can be such a fool, Lucius Verus?"

"Not I, Caesar, but *you* are the fool," snapped Lucius angrily. "The gods do not forget. If you do this thing, what about the gods? The same thing may well be done to you one day: destruction, when least expected—an end to greatness, just when greatness is reached! An ill omen, Caesar; the gods do not forget."

The thin lips twisted bitterly, the chill eyes were deadly.

"So you believe in the gods, rather than in Caesar? A poor choice, but so be it. When we first met, you were a centurion of the Tenth. Tomorrow morning your old rank shall be restored, my virtuous Lucius; another man shall lead the Larks, and my cavalry. Good night."

Lucius Verus saluted and went out.

With morning, the Tenth Legion was paraded, and Lucius once more took his place as company commander, to the mingled delight and amazement of his men.

There was small time, however, for wonder at his sudden demotion. A blast of horns from the German camp announced the coming of the chieftains to confer with Caesar. They came, a company of fair-haired barbaric giants stalking proudly along like demigods—as, indeed, most of them were or claimed to be. They bore gifts to Caesar, and by way of apology for having broken the truce, two white oxen to be sacrificed to the gods of Rome. But the gods of Rome were to have greater sacrifice than this.

They were led by heralds through the army to the walled camp in the rear, and disappeared there.

A trumpet blew, and the Gallic horse burst from the front lines, speeding into full gallop, with the legions following at the double. The astonished Germans, at ease among their wagons and women, disarmed and un-

arrayed, gaped at the martial spectacle—and were still staring when the squadrons hurtled into their front lines and began to slay women and men and children alike.

Then from that vast encampment, stretching down the river shores, arose a terrible noise of screaming. The squadrons wheeled, and through their ranks came the legions—short javelin and stabbing Roman sword at work. Against these heavy-armed veterans the disorganized barbarians were helpless. No quarter was given.

The screaming swept up and up. The masses of the horde, without leaders, broke and fled. They crowded down the narrow strip of land, until they were massed toward the tip of it, unable to retreat farther, the swollen rivers hemming them in. Thousands of them drowned there, as the red swords and spears slaughtered steadily onward throughout the long day. None were spared. Four hundred thousand human beings—more, by some counts—carpeting the ground, the greatest monument to Roman peace ever known.

Some of the Gauls were slain in return, a few of the legionaries. In the sunset, Caesar and his staff were led to where Lucius Verus lay dead. Caesar turned away, hiding his face with the edge of his toga as though in stricken grief; indeed, he shed tears.

"A good soldier, a true Roman," said he. "Let him be given the usual rites. . . . It was unfortunate that he was not a very practical fellow, but we'll forget that."

Perhaps he remembered it, in March of a later year. Perhaps he remembered the words of Lucius when he stepped into the Senate hall and men with daggers came crowding around him, and his own son Brutus drove home the steel. Perhaps—who can say? Like an echo, perhaps, lingered the voice that had died there beside the Rhine:

"The gods do not forget, Caesar. . . . The gods do not forget!"

THE voices and tumultuous figures dissolved and were gone. The screen that had been opened upon past scenes, reappeared, across it running a shifting play of scarlet hues like pools of blood; then these, too, dimmed and faded to nothing.

Lundgren switched on the lights. Cosgrave shut off the current and sat transfixed by what he had seen. One of the general officers spoke in a low, awed tone.

"Upon my word! It's incredible! Do you realize what a striking parallel there was to our own present problem? The temptation to do as they would do?"

"Only too well," said the other, the visitor from London. "Hit them—and hit them first! Be practical! Not only be ready for them, but forestall them! Yes, in one way that makes sound sense. I'd love to dump gas into their buzz-bomb platforms. Unfortunately—"

"That's it," assented the other. "Unfortunately—what was it that fellow said?—the gods do not forget. Another way of saying that we can only wait and see what happens. We can't do things today the way Caesar did."

"Rather, others can—*we* can't!"

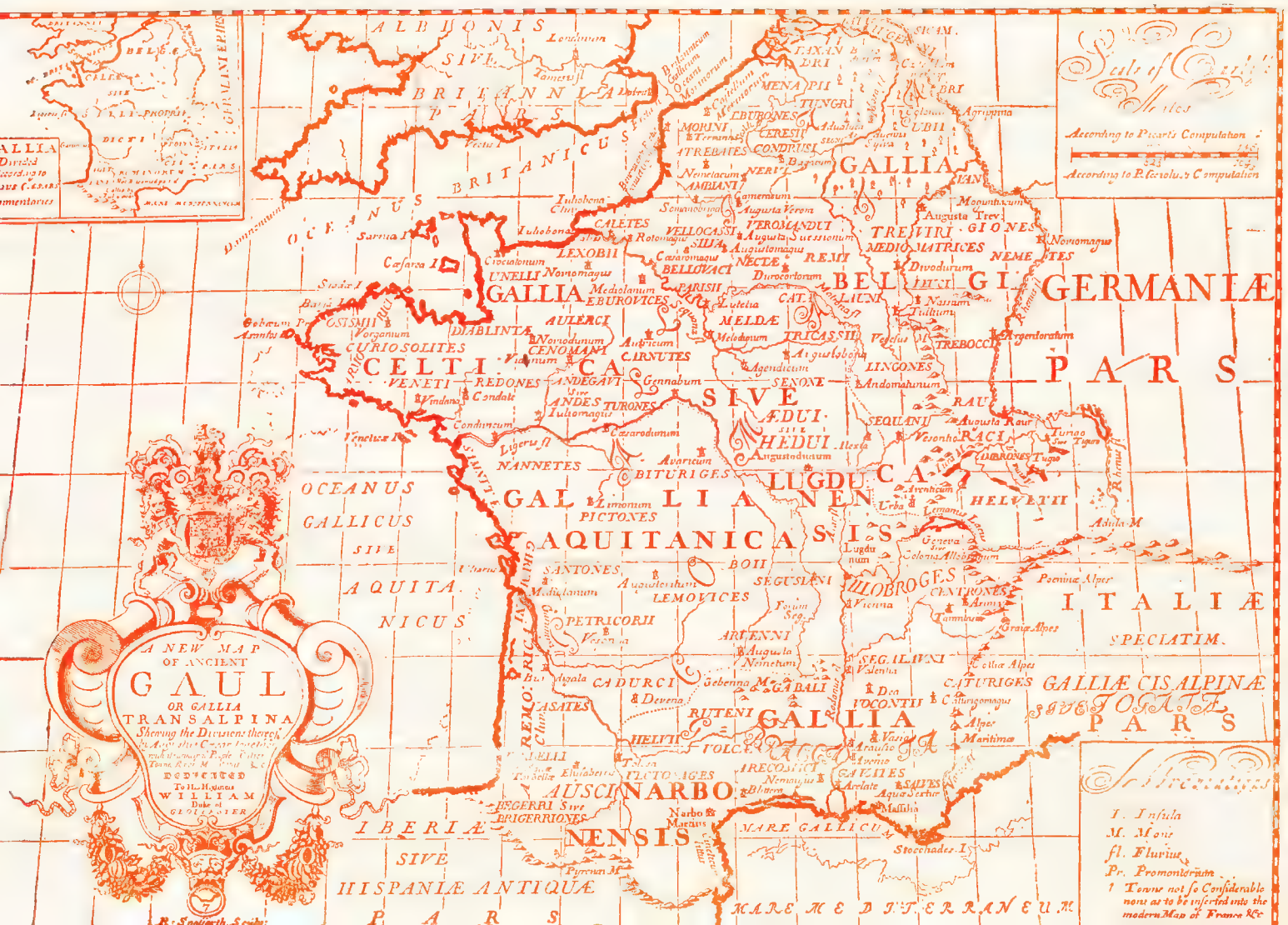
The visitors, with many thanks, departed. Lundgren saw them off and then came back to where Cosgrave sat.

"Well," he said cheerfully, "I don't see that our little show had anything to do with chemical warfare, but they seemed to be satisfied. Do you suppose that they got any hint out of it?"

Cosgrave stirred and looked up, and accepted the proffered cigarette.

"I rather think they did," he said slowly. "I got an idea or two myself."

Close to the upper margin of this map you will find the confluence of the Rhine and the Meuse, where the battle of this story preceded by 2000 years the bitter fighting of today between Nijmegen and Arnhem.



Kwajalein Attack

A vivid battle picture by a well-known writer who enjoyed a box seat.

by MORRIS MARKEY

ALL of that brilliant, incredible day, we were gathered in hushed little knots around the loud-speakers—there were loud-speakers all over the ship—listening to the brilliant, incredible broadcast.

Fifty miles away from our carrier, the battle for Roi and Namur islands in Kwajalein Atoll was at full pitch. At even intervals strikes of planes would drum away from our flight-deck to join the fight; others, spent of fuel and ammunition, would come thumping in, and the crews would waddle off, grinning, for a steam-bath and rubdown, a cup of coffee, before manning their planes again.

We were far from the sound of firing. And yet we were present at the battle. We saw the Marines swarm up the beaches. We felt the thunder and the trembling as great shells burst among the palms and the pill-boxes. We tightened our fists and hoped with passion as we sat in tank turrets creeping up the shattered runways of Roi.

We were able to do this because two quiet voices, now one, now the other, told us with the greatest precision, without the least trace of excitement (save twice) how the battle was going. The voices belonged to the important men in a new sort of reconnaissance. Of course, airplanes have been used for spotting the enemy since the moment of their introduction to war in 1914. But never before like this.

We had brought out on our carrier two officers of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant Colonel W. W. Buchanan of Athens, Georgia, and Major Charles Duchein of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. We had prepared two Douglas Dauntless dive-bombers especially for their use. And their assignment was to fly over the battle, in relays, at whatever altitude they thought best, and report progress to Headquarters.

Headquarters was on another ship, lying close in to the lagoon. And before the generals and the admirals there lay detailed maps of the islands, with every hundred-square-yard area marked off and given a code number. We had such maps on our carrier too, and we bent over them almost without breathing as the voices of our two Marines came out of the little gray boxes. On the Captain's bridge and the Admiral's bridge, in Flight Plot and wardrooms, belowdecks in sick-bay and the fire-rooms and the flyers' ready-rooms, we sat and listened.

Some of the reports came over in code—not a particularly secret code, since it was intended more for brevity than deception. I made notes of much of the broadcast; and in putting them down here I shall reduce the code-words to plain English. And there is another thing I should explain about this transcription: Our flying observers were working, naturally, on a specific short-wave band. The tanks fighting on the islands communicated with each other on a band that was very close, and sometimes our reception faded over to them. This happened, by some mysterious and enthralling chance, at the most critical moments of the fighting. I shall indicate the change-over by writing the reception from the tank men in italics.

Perhaps I should set the scene for you first:

Roi and Namur are twin islands, lying at the northeast apex of the biggest lagoon in the world. (Kwajalein Island itself, taken by the Army's Seventh Division, lies about forty miles to the south.) There are passages through the coral reef enclosing the lagoon, so that our ships could get through to the sheltered water out of range of the Japanese shore guns, and our Marines were assaulting Roi-Namur from the lagoon beaches rather than the outer oceanside beaches. The two islands are about the same size, shaped like crudely drawn squares, their lower corners joined by a narrow sandspit across which the Japanese had built a causeway. Their combined area is less than a square mile.

Bearing away from the outer corners of the islands, like pendants from two grotesque ears, are the low barriers of the coral reef. From it, at frequent intervals, time has lifted tiny islets which now are covered with palm trees and underbrush. From the air they look like beads on a string. On the previous day the Marines had seized five of these islands, two to the southwest and three to the southeast. They had set up artillery on them, so that the assault troops would have support from land-based fire. I am going to call the two westerly islands, for our purposes here, John and Jack. They straddle Big Passage, through which our deep-draft vessels could steam. The easterly islands we shall call Thomas (about two hundred yards from the closest tip of Namur), Francis and Peter.

Buchanan took the first trick. His plane left our deck not long after sunrise, and within half an hour we were getting his voice.

"Hello, Mack. Hello, Mack. This is Buck. Can you get me all right? Over."

He had to repeat that several times.

"Mack. This is Buck. I'm over the islands at about a thousand feet. Can you receive me?"

A booming voice said: "Good morning, Buck. Receiving you okay. What's the situation? Have our boats begun to form up at the starting line? Please describe the situation."

I WILL not be able to give here the description of the situation at that moment. No Japanese escaped from Roi-Namur. They had no air reconnaissance. They do not know how we organized our attack. I can only say that craft of many sorts, many uses, were at this hour drawing to the starting line, still out of range of Japanese guns, weaving and huddling and spacing themselves for zero hour, when their engines would go on full and the attack begin.

But before zero hour came, Buchanan's description of the situation as he was seeing it was interrupted by Mack, back on the Marine Headquarters ship.

Mack to Buck: "Hello, Buck. We have word the enemy has started a counter-attack from tip of Namur to Thomas. Investigate."

Buck to Mack: "I'm going about three hundred feet now, going between Namur and Thomas. Our men still are firing from Thomas, though I can't see too much for the trees. There is firing from the enemy into Thomas."

Mack to Buck: "Can you see any Jap troops or equipment on the cor-

ner of Namur, there? Does it look as if they are preparing an assault on Thomas?"

(Buchanan) "I'm making another slow sweep. I can't see any Japs, but strong fire is coming out of their shelters along the beach. They're putting a lot of lead into Thomas."

(Mack) "We'll get some lead into them."

(Buchanan—about three minutes later) "Yes, the two destroyers in the lagoon are firing into that area now. And here comes fire from the ships lying out to sea. Everything in the book is being thrown at that southeast corner now. I just saw another very nice explosion. I can't see any enemy troops there, though they are still firing. I can see the tracers. I don't believe they will try the crossing now. They just couldn't make it through that fire."

(Mack) "That seems to be under control. Report, please, on the situation in the lagoon."

(Buchanan) "I've gone up to about a thousand feet for a good look. All right. Our boats have stopped milling at the formation point and are moving slowly in columns up to the starting line. They are in good formation. There is no enemy fire reaching them yet. I think everything will be up there in proper place for zero hour. It is going smoothly. Our main problem up here is traffic. Our planes are flying all around us, at all levels, dropping bombs and going in to strafe. The only signs of life we can see on the islands are the muzzle-flashes of their anti-aircraft guns. They are not putting up much flak, but some. The surface vessels are now putting a continuous mass of fire on southeast Namur. Everything there is so obscured by smoke now I can't see much. Can't see whether the enemy is firing or not."

(Mack) "Are our troops on Thomas still firing?"

(Buchanan) "Wait until I can get down close to them. . . . Yes. I can see their gun-flashes, but not as continuous as before. The threat of counter-attack there seems to have been controlled."

(Mack) "What is the situation in the lagoon?"

(Buchanan) "I'm just making a low swing over Roi and Namur. Still no signs of life. No people are moving about. There are a number of good fires going. Everybody has moved underground. Now I'll sweep out over the lagoon and take a look. . . . Yes, all of our boats are moving up according to plan. They are still in column, but the leading boats have reached the starting line and are fanning out to take up their positions on it. The three destroyers in the lagoon are keeping up a very active fire."

(Mack) "Buck, we have a report that approximately six enemy amphibious tanks are floating in the west end of the lagoon, with their occupants either dead or feigning dead. Verify."

(Buchanan—after a brief silence:) "I'm checking those tanks. Can you give me a better location? There are hundreds and hundreds of boats milling about on the water down there. . . . Wait. I see some activity on that sandbar just inside Big Passage. Some craft are down there. I'm circling. Will go lower."

(Mack) "Is any enemy fire landing in there?"

(Buchanan) "No. I can't see any. Those boats down there are ours, not the enemy's. One of them is stuck on the sandbar and they're working it off. Have you any better location for the six enemy tanks?"

(Mack) "I'll try to get something. Look over the situation up at Thomas, and report whether any of our troops are moving over from Francis and Peter in support of Thomas."

(Buchanan) "Roger. Fire against the corner of Namur has relaxed a good deal. I can see no signs of the enemy there now. They have about quit firing, and they are not attempting the crossing to Thomas. There go four or five of our amphibious tanks, moving from Francis to Thomas. And there goes a new fire starting on Namur. A big shell or a bomb hit in there, and there was quite a nice explosion. It is burning briskly now."

THE radio faded over to the circuit being used on the landing craft as they formed up in the lagoon for the assault.

Dog to Henry: "One of my engines has lost a lot of revs and I think it is about to quit. I'll fall back to the rear."

Henry to Dog: "Stay where you are. We're not going in full speed, anyway. Keep in position as long as you can."

Dog to Henry: "Roger. I'm alongside Blue. He can't get his ramp to close properly."

Henry to Dog: "Tell him to keep in formation. All keep in formation who can do so. Those who can't, get through the best you can, but make your objective."

Dog to Henry: "Roger."

(Buchanan) "Everything is on the line now. The last boats are taking their places. Will report when they cross the line and start. There is no evidence of artillery from the islands. A beautiful bombing attack from the air is now in progress on the beach defenses at Namur."

(Mack) "How about Roi?"

(Buchanan) "They are just now receiving a tremendous salvo of bombs. It looks very good."

(Voice from the lagoon) "Tell those LCI fellows to get the hell up there right away!"

(Mack) "Give us a final report on that counter-attack against Thomas. It was repulsed, wasn't it?"

(Buchanan — after brief silence) "It's all taken care of. From what I saw, it wasn't a serious threat anyway, and it was taken care of by that tremendous barrage and strafing attack. The strafing attack is still on, but there are no signs of living targets."

(Over our radio came several long bursts of machine-gun fire. There was no explanation. We assumed that Buchanan's pilot had found something to shoot at.)

(Mack) "Report anything you have with reference to Z hour."

(Buchanan) "All elements are now waiting in their proper positions on the starting line. There is no evidence of enemy fire against them."

(Mack) "Report on any obstacles observed on the beaches."

(Buchanan) "You'll have to wait a few minutes on that. A low cloud has just come over to obscure the beaches."

(Mack) "Is there any evidence of firing from Thomas to Namur?"

(Buchanan) "There is too much cloud and smoke and dust to see. And our aircraft are just making a strike in there. I can't go in."

(Mack—after a brief interval) "Report whether there is any fire from our troops on Thomas into Namur."

(Buchanan) "None observed last ten minutes."

(Mack) "Report immediately on those amphibious tanks with enemy insignia. Fly low over the area between John Island and the center of the lagoon."

(Buchanan) "I'm making low sweeps over area indicated. This area is crowded with our craft. I am unable to identify the enemy craft you speak of."

(Mack) "What is the situation over Roi and Namur?"

(Buchanan) "The ceiling over the two islands is now absolutely zero because of cloud and smoke and dust. The two islands are totally obscured."

(Mack) "Are there any splashes around the starting line?"

(Buchanan) "I don't see any. I don't believe there is any enemy fire at all. I'm now flying at four hundred feet over the starting line. All the waves have formed up and are waiting. The destroyers on the line are firing actively into the islands."

There was now, so to speak, an intermission as Major Duchein arrived over the battle to relieve Lieutenant Colonel Buchanan. He was ordered at once to make a search for the elusive enemy water-borne tanks. He could find no trace of them, and re-

ported he believed the report of their presence to be in error.

(Mack to Duchein) "Do you understand the general situation, as it exists now?"

(Duchein) "No. Please inform."

AS Buchanan went over the general state of affairs, explaining the matter of the aborted enemy counter-attack upon Thomas, another situation arose. There had been a delay in forming our hordes of landing craft at the starting line. Buchanan's plane had been equipped with colored flares with which he would control the creeping barrage from the surface vessels as our Marines moved in to the attack. Duchein's plane did not have flares. And it seemed absolutely necessary for Buchanan to remain on the scene.

(Mack to Buck) "Can you stay another hour? How's your gas?"

(Buchanan) "I'll make it hold out."

There was a fade on the radio. For the first time we heard the tanks, which were nested in their landing craft.

(Voice) "Killer, shall I turn up my engines now?"

(Killer) "No."

(Voice—a little anxious) "We got to get the sons of bitches warmed up, haven't we?"

(Killer) "Hold your shirt. I'll tell you when to start your engines."

And as the radio signals faded back again:

(Buchanan) "The first and second waves have crossed the starting line now, and the third wave is crossing it. All the guns we have are firing on the beaches."

(Mack) "Is there any enemy fire from the islands?"

(Buchanan) "There is fire falling between our first wave and the beach, about six hundred yards in front of the first wave. The first wave has opened fire with its guns, and it's a very spectacular sight. Both the leading waves are nicely formed up, and the third wave is now forming nicely."

(Mack) "Keep reporting."

(Buchanan) "The first wave is now about one-third of the way in, about thirty-five hundred yards from the beach. It is a beautiful sight on the beach. There are flashes of flame every few seconds."

(Mack) "How about the fire from the beaches?"

(Buchanan) "There is considerable fire falling about halfway between the first wave and the beach. I am unable to tell whether it is from the beach or our own guns."

(Mack) "Is your gas supply holding out?"

(Buchanan) "Yes. I will stay. All types of fire are now falling on the beaches in terrific volume. The first wave is moving steadily in. They're about eighteen hundred or two thousand yards from the beaches. I've just swept down close to them and saw their faces plainly. There are no casualties yet. I believe that fire halfway between them and the beach is the creeping barrage of our own naval guns."

(Mack) "How about the second and third waves?"

(Buchanan) "They are maintaining relative position."

(Mack) "Is anything still at the starting line?"

(Buchanan) "Another wave has just crossed, and another is just coming up to cross. There are some new fires on the islands. Progress is satisfactory. The second wave is firing its heavy guns now. There is a tremendous volume of fire, but the majority is slightly short."

(Mack) "What is the distance from the beach now?"

(Buchanan) "The leading elements are about one thousand yards from the beach. . . . Wait a minute. Mack, are you receiving?"

(Mack) "Go on. Keep going. I am receiving."

(Buchanan) "The boats on the left are moving faster than those on the right of the line. They are closer to Roi than they are to Namur. If they don't pull back and keep in line, I'll have to drop flares and stop our barrage—or they'll walk right into it."

(Mack) "Keep going. Report fully."

(Buchanan) "We're putting heavy fire into the beaches. We are now about six hundred yards out, and the people over at the left are correcting their line. But not enough. Some of those fellows are going to get in ahead of time, ahead of everybody else. And it's this way: On the left they are a little ahead of schedule, on the right a little behind it. Some of those on the left are circling back now, apparently receiving some fire from the beach or realizing they are walking into our barrage—not walking—they are still on the water, of course. I can see smoke from their guns as they fire, so there must be opposition there. I think I should drop flares and lift our barrage inland, or we'll be hitting our own men."

After a slight silence: (Buchanan) "Stand by for flare drop. Flares have been dropped. It was necessary because fire from our ships was still falling on the beach. It has stopped now. Our leading boats are about three hundred yards from Roi beach. Another oil tank on Namur has just been hit. A big column of smoke is going up. Our leading wave has ceased firing on schedule, and Naval gunfire is hitting ahead of us now, well ahead. The barrage is lifted and back."

(Mack) "Is there any fire from our guns on the little islands?"

(Buchanan) "I can't tell. There is too much smoke, and their guns are hidden by trees. I couldn't see the flashes even if they are firing. One of our craft is now only fifty yards off the beach. There is some firing right in front of this point, and some of our craft have turned to circle before going in. All our craft are firing now. Now four or five of our leading craft have beached, and some others are coming in. This is the only landing we've actually made. There is considerable fire splashing around the second and third waves, which are still four or five hundred yards out on the water, coming in. This looks like seventy-five-millimeter stuff coming from the island. I haven't seen any hits yet."

BUCHANAN had to leave now. His gas reserve was low, and he had to make it back to the carrier. He handed over to Duchein, whose first words, obviously spoken to himself, came low and quiet over the air: "Boys, this is it, hunh?"

(Mack) "Take over, Duchein. Keep talking."

(Duchein) "I can observe fire now from our guns on the little islands. The clouds have lifted."

(Mack) "Are the landings proceeding according to plan?"

(Duchein) "A number of our craft are up on the beach at Namur now, but five or six are circling close off shore and waiting to come in. I'm over Roi now, and a number of our craft are in."

(Mack) "What about the progress of our tanks?"

(Duchein) "A number of them are now about fifty yards offshore at the southwest beach of Roi and moving in steadily. A great many of our troops are on the beach. They are standing up—apparently receiving no enemy fire. Very few of them are lying down. I'm now making a sweep of the whole beach, fifty feet above our men. All of our first-wave boats are beached. I observed no hits on any of them. Our men on the beach are standing or kneeling, not seeking cover. Now I'm over Namur beach. Some of our troops are lying in the sand, but I can't see much enemy fire. I'm making another run now, low. There is no fire against us yet. Airplanes are everywhere. Our men on Roi beach are not receiving enemy fire. They are walking forward in column. I'm back over Namur. At the southeast corner some of our men are seeking cover. A few are sitting on the beach and firing rockets inland. I see a dozen men standing or crouching, pretty well in the open."

(Mack) "Are they our troops or the enemy?"

(Duchein) "Our troops. I haven't spotted a single enemy trooper yet. There is a great deal of smoke from the big fires drifting over. It is probably to the advantage of our men."

(Mack) "What about our other waves?"

(Duchein) "They are landing in on schedule. I'm over Roi, now. The Marines have advanced about three hundred yards inland. I haven't observed any enemy fire, but that doesn't mean they have not received it. But great numbers of our men are standing or kneeling in the open. Now I'm back over Namur again. Our men are forming a skirmish line before a big concrete blockhouse."

(Mack) "Is the blockhouse holding us up?"

(Duchein) "It's hard to tell. But not far from it there is an enemy ditch, a deep tank-trap, and our troops are taking cover there in great numbers. I'm down low and moving fast on these continual sweeps, and now I'm back over Roi. Our lines are continually advancing there, standing up and advancing, and there cannot be a great amount of enemy fire."

(Mack) "Is there any enemy anti-aircraft fire? Are they shooting at our planes?"

(Duchein) "Yes. I drew fire a few minutes ago from what looked like twenty-millimeter. I think some of the stuff went through our wings, but no damage. It's impossible to see much over Namur now on account of the heavy smoke. But I can see the Marines forming up a skirmish line along the anti-tank ditch. It is good cover for them. Some of our Landing Craft, Tanks, are moving up and around the western beaches of Roi now, out at sea about a hundred yards. They are going up to the northern tip of the island and get the tanks ashore there and hit the enemy in the rear. Our men on Roi are walking down the edges of the landing strips slowly and casually. There is little enemy fire against them."

(Mack) "How are things going on Namur?"

(Duchein) "The troops are not standing up. They seem to be stalled for the moment, about a hundred yards inland from the beach. I say again, the troops are not standing up. They are covering themselves around that ditch."

(Mack) "What about the spit between the two islands? Is the causeway still intact? Can they move troops from one island to the other—troops in vehicles, I mean, or tanks or trucks?"

(Duchein) "There isn't any activity on the spit. The causeway has been pretty well knocked out by bombs. I don't think they could move any wheels over it. Anyway, they are not trying now."

The radio faded to the tanks which had landed on the western beach of Roi:

Killer to Hank: "Can you see me?"

(Hank) "I can see you, Killer. I can't see Congo."

(Killer) "Congo is over on my right flank behind those smashed buildings. Take it easy and don't fall into any holes. Just mooch along and keep me in sight, and maybe we'll—"

THE radio faded back on our circuit again:

(Duchein) "Here is the situation at this moment: Progress on Roi is ahead of schedule. The men are moving forward carefully but standing up. There is not a lot of cover for the enemy on this island. I can see our men walking around in the plane revetments and looking at the smashed Zeros in them. Five or six tanks have just landed on the western beach, and they are moving slowly toward the big pillboxes at the northern end of the runways. On Namur the situation is different. The fallen palm trees give some cover to the enemy, and there are many more buildings here. All of them are wrecked by the bombardment, but they are concrete and steel, and give some cover. Our troops are not making much progress."

(Mack) "Proceed immediately to northwest corner of Namur. Men have been observed there. Determine their identity immediately. An air strike is impending."

(Duchein) "I'm over northwest corner and can observe no men. . . . Wait. I can see one or two men. No more. I don't believe any of our men could have got up into there."

(Mack) "The air strike is moving in now."

(Duchein) "Bombs have just been dropped on northwest corner Namur. I am sure men I saw there were enemy and not our troops. From the way they were moving about, it didn't seem possible they were Marines. There is one medium tank now in the vicinity of Area 824. . . . Make it two. And three tanks have just landed on Namur beach. They are moving inland. A number of Marines are walking around the beach near them, and receiving no fire— Great God Almighty, wait a minute! There was a terrific explosion. Wait—the whole damn' island just blew up."

(Mack) "Duchein, are you hit? How is your plane? Are you still flying? Answer immediately. Mack to Duchein. Answer immediately. Are you hit?"

(Duchein) "We're a thousand feet higher now. Got blown there. My God, everything went! Wait a minute until the smoke clears and I can tell whether it got our tanks that just landed in there."

(Mack) "There must be heavy casualties among our troops if they had moved in at all."

(Duchein) "Wait a minute. I'll try to see. I can't see any of our men around that place where the explosion came. There's a terrific column of yellow smoke going up fast. It must be going to ten thousand feet. I can't see any of our men around there now at all."

Fifty miles out at sea we heard, and we rushed out to the flight-deck and looked toward Roi-Namur. Presently we saw the pillar of yellow smoke rise above the horizon and majestically mount to the heavens. Some days later, on Namur, I looked at the crater where the explosion occurred. It measured 156 feet in diameter and was about forty feet deep. We shall never know precisely what happened there; but the dump must have contained torpedo war-heads or something of equally violent explosive nature. Nor shall we know what caused its detonation—whether caused by an electric fuse touched off opportunely by the enemy at some distance, or a well-aimed shell from one of his northern guns.

(Duchein) "The tanks on Roi are now going steadily up in column, and fanning out. They are well ahead of the infantry, moving down the edge of the main runway. They are firing. I can see their tracers. They are moving toward that big concrete blockhouse at the end of the runway. They are now in Area 813."

The radio faded:

"This is Killer. The first section will go on up now, with the second section covering us. Now be careful. Don't drop into any shell-holes."

His Southern voice was slow and calm. We could not hear, but we could sense, the rumble and clatter of his tank.

(Hank) "See anything, Killer?"

(Killer) "I think I do. Just take it easy. Sure—look Hank, look Congo—in that brush just up ahead. Can't you see people moving? They're firing tracers at these planes of ours. But let's be sure they're the enemy. Hold your fire! Acknowledge!"

(Hank) "Roger, Killer."

(Congo) "Roger from Congo, Killer. I see 'em moving around now, and I see their tracers. They're firing at our planes all right."

(Killer) "Wait my orders to fire."

(Hank) "Whenever you're ready, Killer. I'm on your left over here. I can see you all right."

(Killer) "They're anti-aircraft people, all right. You see 'em running around in there? I'm firing. Watch my tracers, now, and then let 'em have three bursts, three long ones."

We could not hear the firing. The radios were screened against it.

(Duchein) "—and all our stuff is landed on the beach now. The progress on Roi is satisfactory. The infantry is about halfway up the island from the beach, and those tanks are far out in front of them. They seem to have some of the enemy trapped in the northeast corner of Roi, and that ought to be over pretty soon now. On Namur, we have fanned out and infiltrated, and we haven't got a line. The troops with tank support are isolating individual pillboxes and taking their time. They know they've got the island now, and they're not taking foolish chances. No use getting killed now, and I don't blame them. I see Marines all along the beach."

(Mack) "Walking or lying down?"

(Duchein) "Walking."

(Mack) "That's good news."

(Duchein) "You said it. There goes another tremendous explosion on Roi—Area 851. Thank God I wasn't sitting right over that one!"

(Mack) "I just felt it myself."

The radio faded:

(Killer) "About fifteen people just came out of that tent and are running to the left. You see 'em?"

(Congo) "Sure, I see 'em. See those Japs over there? They're running into that doorway. Get up on a little higher ground and give 'em your machine-guns. Watch my tracers, Killer."

(Killer) "You're shooting too high. Here go my tracers. Watch them. And be careful, Congo, be careful, Hank, don't get into a shell-hole."

(Hank) "That's laying it in there, boys. That's what I call being on the beam."

(Killer) "Look out! There's a live bomb hanging out of that wrecked plane. Don't go too close to it. Don't hit it with a bullet."

(Congo) "How about me going in there and running over these sons of bitches, and the rest of you covering me with your fire?"

(Killer) "Keep your shirt on. We'll get 'em. Follow me carefully now."

(Hank) "Come around to my left, Killer! Come around fast! My gun's hung up! Hurry!"

(Killer) "I'm coming, Hank. Can you fire manually?"

(Hank) "I'm trying, Killer. Hurry, will you!"

(Killer) "Step on it. Don't go in too slow. The bastards can hang onto you that way."

(Hank) "Hurry, Killer! I've got no gun, and they're—"

Some moments elapsed. The next clear voice we heard was Killer's calling Post Command:

"This is Killer. We have some Japs cornered in a hangar and a pillbox and can't run 'em out. Get some infantry up here."

(PC) "North or south hangar?"

(Killer) "The north one."

(PC) "Roger."

In a little while we heard Killer's voice again:

"Here's some infantry coming up on our right."

(Congo) "Ours?"

(Killer) "Sure. Yes. I identify them. Pass the word. Our own infantry. Do not fire on them."

(Congo) "Roger. When they get here, are we going in and take those bastards?"

The radio faded:

(Duchein) "—infantry moving up on the eastern edge of Roi where our tanks have got some of the enemy cornered in a hangar. On Namur the situation is progressing, and it is just a matter of a little time now. The tanks are fanning down all the roads, and the only points of resistance are isolated."

(Mack) "Have we secured the spit?"

(Duchein) "I can't see any activity there. Some Marines are walking around, but they are not firing. They are drinking out of their canteens."

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(Mack) "Flak is reported from northeast corner of Roi. Verify."

(Duchein) "I can see that infantry moving now, very carefully, in the northeast corner, going toward the pillbox. Now the tanks are moving closer."

(Mack) "I said flak!"

(Duchein) "Sure. We got a lot of it passing there a second ago. Ask my pilot! Stand by for just a minute, please. Making adjustments."

(Mack) "I've got to know about that flak. We've got airplanes coming in for a strike."

(Duchein) "Stand by."

Some moments elapsed. Then:

(Duchein) "No flak."

(Mack) "None at all? We had reports from fighter pilots—"

(Duchein) "No flak."

I had to stop taking notes then, because a plane was waiting for me down on the flight-deck. But late that night, sitting in the wardroom, I asked Duchein: "What the hell were those adjustments you had to make when Headquarters wanted to know about the flak?"

"Well sir," he said, "my pilot and I picked up a pair of twenty-millimeter guns on that point. And the bastards had the gall to shoot at us. So we wanted to take them out, and there was a long slit-trench full of Japanese there too, and we wanted to take them out. I knew what would happen if I reported that. Mack would tell me to keep on about my business and let somebody else do the shooting. So I said I was making adjustments, which was the adjustments of my sights."

I knew that the Major had been taking gunnery practice every day since we left Pearl Harbor. I also knew that he was certainly not a qualified rear-seat gunner. So I said: "What happened?"

The pilot of his plane was sitting there, and he spoke up. "I can tell you what happened: The Major damn' near ripped off my tail surfaces when he swung that gun around on that trench full of the bastards."

In all the laughter, the Major admitted that he had fired a good many bullets into his fin and elevators, but he said: "I knocked out that trench full of them, didn't I, Joe?"

The pilot said: "Who could miss from an altitude of sixty-one feet?"

Duchein said: "And that's why I could report that the flak at that point was over from then on."

I said: "Charley, you don't mean to tell me you pressed your triggers and *killed* all those people, do you?"

He had a curiously boyish way of expressing justification for himself, and now his eyebrows went up, and his face became ludicrously sad.

"They were shooting at me, weren't they?" he demanded.

Jano seemed to be groping for a weapon. . . . "On the floor," said Jerry. "That's the thing you want."

MURDER IS STUPID

Trouble walks right in on Detective Jerry Mooney

by Kerry O'Neil

THE thousand eyes of the Etruria Tower were, one by one, winking out that evening; and Mickey Sayre, secretary to Jerry Mooney, was making ready to close the office when the door suddenly opened, a girl slipped in, closed it behind her and put on the catch.

Mickey, who had been employed with Mooney for quite some time, and was accustomed to all sorts of happenings, looked quietly at the girl who stood white-faced and shaking, and seeming unable to speak.

"Stand away from the door," Mickey advised her. "Whoever it is you're hiding from will see your shadow on the glass."

Obediently, the girl shrank to one side. She was someone who belonged in the building; Mickey remembered having often seen her in the elevators as they went up or down.

"There's a man!" gasped the girl. "He's been following me. I'm afraid of him."

"You belong in the building, don't you?" asked Mickey.

"Yes; in the office of Darrow & Company, on the top floor."

Mickey knew of Darrow & Company. They did Government work; there were military and naval people going up and down on business there at all hours of the day. And so when she saw the figure of a man, a burly figure, showing blackly on the frosted glass of the door, and then heard the knob of the fastened door turn, she motioned to the girl to go into Mooney's office. The girl did so. Mickey then silently took the catch from the door and stepped back to her desk. She had taken up the telephone and stood waiting when there came a knock on the door.

"Come in," she called.

Again the knob turned, and this time the door opened. An immensely fat man entered; he had a great round face, smooth and boylike; he stood looking at Mickey with a placid smile.

She spoke into the telephone.

"Police, please," she said. The man closed the door and stood with his wide back against it, still smiling. Mickey added: "This is 1708 Etruria Tower. Please send police here at once." She put down the telephone and said to the man. "If you'll sit down, they'll be here in a few minutes; then you can tell them what you want."

The placid smile had not left the round face; indeed, it had grown still wider.

"It is Mr. Mooney I have wished to see," he said. "The police I do not know."

"Mr. Mooney can be seen in the morning. From ten to eleven is always a good time."

"So smart a girl!" the man said admiringly. "You should not waste your time." He opened the door and made a good-humored little bow. "Tomorrow, in the morning, I shall be here."

He went out, closing the door softly behind him. Mickey waited for a space and then went into the side office.

"He's gone," she told the girl. "But if I were you, I'd not leave just yet. He might be outside somewhere."

"I'll be scared to death," said the girl. "I'll expect to see him every place."

She was a pretty girl, and very smartly dressed; but there was something in her large eyes and rather heavy face that gave her that expression covered by the word *dumb*.

"I've been a terrible fool," she said. "I thought I knew, and was being smart. I even told Freddy he was crazy, and I know he had a lot more sense than I had."

"That man who was just here didn't look like a pick-up guy," suggested Mickey, a questioning note in her voice.

"Oh, he wasn't," said the girl. "If it was only that, I wouldn't have been afraid of him. I know how to get rid of that kind."

Just then the door of the outer office opened and closed. Instantly Mickey took up Mooney's desk phone, contriving to rattle it as she did so.

"I'm obliged to you, Captain Pash. When will the policemen be here? Oh, they are on their way! Well, that's fine!"

"What's that about policemen?" asked the voice of Jerry. He appeared in the doorway as he spoke. Mickey laughed and put down the telephone.

"It's all right," she said. "Only a bluff. We had a visitor a few minutes ago, and I thought he'd come back."

She told Jerry what had happened; and he looked appraisingly at the girl.

"You work for Darrow's?" he said.

"Yes," the girl replied. "I've been with them for a year."

He asked her some questions, and she told him something of what she'd said to Mickey.

"If you didn't think this party wasn't trying to pick you up," Jerry said, "what did you think?"

"Well, that's the thing that makes me believe I'm a fool. It all started with Freddy Locke, who is also in Darrow's. He's a terribly nice boy, but he does like to go around a little, and when you go around, you meet people. Well, he met some that maybe he shouldn't have met—though he didn't know what they were until they started to hint about things."

"What kind of things?" asked Jerry.

"Well, I guess he'd got a few drinks in him, and he talked too much—about Government things; and afterward he was scared almost into fits when they began to hint what a fix he'd got himself into, and what would happen to him if they went to the FBI and told about it."

JERRY sat down, facing the girl; he was beginning to be interested.

"They said that to Freddy, did they?" he inquired.

"Well, I didn't think much of it when Freddy told me about it." She said this with a sort of toss of the head; but nervousness was evident in the little break in her voice. "I said

they were kidding him. But then he told me they'd been asking him about the office. They mentioned a drawing he'd been talking about one night in a bar. They said they wanted it."

"How long ago was this?" asked Jerry.

"About two days. Freddy was scared. He told me about it. He said he was sure he would be fired; and then we couldn't get married, like we are planning to. Well, that got me kind of worked up too, and I said why didn't he give them the drawing."

"You did!" cried Mickey, horrified. "Don't you know all Government things like that must be kept secret?"

"Well, I was excited," said the girl. "I'd been wanting to be married to Freddy, and right then it looked as if it wasn't ever going to happen. When I said for him to give them the drawing, he was scared worse than ever, and I saw he wouldn't do it."

"And then what did *you* do?" asked Jerry.

The girl hesitated. The look on her face was one of fright.

"He'd told me who these people were; and so I met one of them without Freddy's knowing it, and I said if they'd not mention anything about him, I'd get them the drawing."

There was a pause. Then Mooney asked:

"And did you?"

"I took it out of the safe. About an hour ago." Here the girl began to sob. "I telephoned the parties; but on my way there I had to pass the *Globe* office, where they have the radio outside one of the windows, and I heard a man telling about spies and traitors. And right then it came into my mind that's just what I was meaning to be. And I got scared and hurried back here to the Etruria Tower to put the drawing where I'd got it from."

She wiped her eyes with a handkerchief.

"I saw what a fool I was; and I saw what Freddy'd think of me, too. But then I noticed that fat man following me," she said to Mickey, "and I got in kind of a panic. I remembered there was a detective office on this floor, and I got out of the elevator and ran in here. I didn't mean any wrong," she said. "I just didn't want anything to stop Freddy and me being married, that's all."

"You still have the drawing?" asked Jerry.

"Oh, yes. It's here in my bag."

JERRY reached for the telephone. "I'll have to report this to the FBI," he said.

But she got up, much agitated.

"Oh, don't do that! Freddy'll be got into it. I don't care for myself. I deserve it, I guess. But he was so grand about it. He wouldn't do a wrong thing like that, no matter what happened."

Jerry valued this, and it impressed him. No matter how stanch Freddy was, the FBI, if they got the case, would put him through the wringer.

"Would anybody be in Darrow's office now?" he asked the girl.

"Freddy should be there. He works some nights. But I wouldn't want him to know about this, not for anything," said the girl.

"Would the safe still be open at this hour?"

"Oh, no."

"If Freddy is in the office, could he open it?"

"No sir. No one knows the combination but Mr. James Darrow, and Mr. Gross, the manager."

Jerry considered the situation. Finally he said:

"Do you think you'd have enough confidence to turn it over to me? I might be able to find a way to get it back into the office before it's missed."

The girl hesitated; then she opened her handbag and searched in it. They saw a gradual renewal of her fright. At last she cried out:

"It's not here! What could have happened? The bag has never been out of my hands since I put it there!"

Mickey took the bag from the girl's shaking hands and emptied its contents on the desk. There was a quantity of all sorts of things, but the drawing was not among them. Mickey searched all the pockets inside the bag. But the looked-for thing was still unfound.

The girl covered her face with her hands; she wept and cried out; and they were some time quieting her. When she was in a state permitting her to listen and understand, Mooney said to her:

"It's up to you, now. You've got to think back and remember. Were you still in the Darrow office when you put the drawing in your bag?"

"Yes. I was."

"Who else was there?"

"No one but Freddy Locke."

Jerry's fingers pattered on the arms of his chair; he studied her attentively.

"You weren't talking with him about anything, were you?"

"Yes—about our wedding. He said if he was fired, it'd have to be postponed. And I told him it wouldn't be postponed."

"You said that to him?"

"I said no matter what else happened, our marriage was going through."

"What'd *he* say?"

"I don't think he said anything."

"Well, how did he look?"

"I didn't notice how—" Then she paused and said: "He watched me. He was thinking about something."

"Keep on as you're going," said Jerry. "Get your mind on the bag. Are you sure you never laid it down after you put the drawing into it? Am I to understand that you held it in your hands all through the time afterward?"

"Yes, I did."

"You didn't put it down anywhere at any time—on a desk, or on a chair? While you went, maybe, from one office to another? Maybe only for a minute?"

The girl stared at Mooney; then she cried out and ran toward the office door. But Jerry stopped her.

"Freddy!" she said. "Freddy's got it! He took it. Let me go! Please let me go!"

"You're going up to Darrow's?"

"I must. I must see if it's so."

"Well, we'll both see," said Jerry. He nodded to Mickey. "You can shut up the shop. I'll let myself in when I'm through."

He went down the corridor with the girl, rang for an elevator, and they ascended to the top floor.

CHAPTER TWO

DARROW & COMPANY occupied a good deal of space. They did certain sorts of photography, made blueprints, did fine engraving, all of a scientific kind, and maps for highly specialized use.

The place was dark now, and the elevator operator said:

"I think everyone's gone for the night—though I did see a light there a while ago."

They knocked, but there was no reply. The girl, sobbing, said she had no key. Jerry looked at the elevator man.

"When you go down, pass the word to the night superintendent. There's a little something happened, and we want to get in." After the car had gone down, he said to the girl: "What's Freddy's home telephone?"

She gave him the number, and he called it at an open telephone in the corridor.

"He's not here," a voice said. "He's at the office tonight. He telephoned awhile ago he'd be there for a couple of hours."

"He must have changed his mind afterward," said the girl when Jerry had told her this.

In a few minutes a man advanced along the corridor. He was tall and thin, with a nervous manner; he looked at them searchingly and asked what they wanted. When told, he said:

"Any person with common sense would understand that unknown people are not permitted to enter the offices in the building after hours."

"This girl is employed by the Darrow Company," said Jerry.

"My name is Elsie Homer," said the girl. "I'm a stenographer here."

"That may be," said the man, "but it doesn't change the rule."

"I can see what you mean," Jerry told him, "and as far as it goes it's all right. But there was a young man here tonight that we want to see. And as far as we know, he should be here now."

But the man remained cold. Jerry had been studying him and didn't like him. There was a sidelong furtiveness about him that might mean a number of things, and none of them favorable.

"Before the office can be opened," said the man, "I must have the permission of Mr. Gross, Darrow's manager."

"This," said Jerry, "may turn out to be a vital matter. It might really be one for the police." The man looked at him with a sudden intentness. "As a matter of fact," went on Jerry, "I think calling them would be the easiest way to go about it."

"What," asked the man, the gray of sudden fear gathering about him, "would the police have to do with it?"

"When a person is not sure of what's behind a thing," Jerry told him, "they are handy people to whistle for."

"This building," said the man, and he seemed to bite his words viciously, "is a high-class place. We do not need the police, and we will not have them."

"Fellah," said Jerry, and eyed the man coldly, "I'm not so sure about not needing them as you are. If you don't unlock this door, you're going to have them here whether you like it or not."

For a moment it seemed that the man would leap at him; perhaps it was the big, athletic, fast-looking shape of Mooney that warned him not to. He stood perfectly still for a moment or two; then he took a key from his pocket and unlocked the door.

"This," he said, "is against all our regulations. And I do it only because it is the best of two undesired things."

He led the way into the office, and turned on the light. Elsie Homer looked about timorously.

"Freddy can't be here," she said. "He wouldn't stay in a dark office. There wouldn't be any reason for it."

"What part of the place did he work in?" asked Jerry.

"In one of the back rooms. He's an engraver, and they gave him most of the particular work to do. He has been working hard of late; he may have fallen asleep."

"That wouldn't account for the lights being shut off," said Jerry. He turned to speak to the man who'd let them in, but he was not in sight. There were quick soft steps in the corridor; Jerry went to an open doorway and looked out. There was a stairway opening downward, about a dozen yards away, and he caught a hurried *pat-pat-pat* of hastening feet.

MOONEY reached the head of the stairs in two or three leaps. Two floors down he saw a hand sliding along the slanted rail; the rapid beat of the hurrying feet was plainer than before. There was something about this sudden flight that aroused Mooney to the pitch of pursuit, and in an instant he was down the stairs and after the man. But he'd taken no more than a dozen steps when he heard a sudden and piercing scream from the girl in Darrow & Company's office. Jerry turned about and hurried back. The door leading to the rear offices was now open; the light had been turned on. And Mooney, as he entered, saw the girl crouched on the floor beside the silent body of a young man.

"They've killed him!" she cried frantically. "They've killed him, and it's all my fault!"

"Take it easy," Jerry said. "You've got to hold yourself together. Maybe he's not dead."

"He is," she said. "He's dead! His poor head is all bleeding. He's dead!"

Jerry got her to her feet and put her in a chair, where she collapsed in a sobbing heap. But she was right. Freddy Locke was dead. His head had been crushed in by a single blow. The weapon with which this blow had been struck—a hammer—lay on the floor beside him. Jerry, after an effort, silenced the girl, and told her:

"This is a police job, and I'll have to call them. When they get here, they'll ask a lot of questions. I think it will be as well for you to say nothing just now about the drawing. That'll come up sometime later; but just now we'll not have the cops fumbling with it. Freddy had got into some kind of trouble. That'll be your story. You don't know what it was. You came to me to see if I could do anything. We came up here to speak with him. And we found him like this."

WITHIN fifteen minutes the police were there—two uniformed men and Engle, Captain Pash's favorite forerunner. Engle looked at the body.

"Dead," he admitted. "And likely by way of the hammer. Who found him?"

Mooney motioned toward the girl. "She works here. So did he."

Engle looked attentively at the girl, who sat huddled in her chair.

"What are the chances?" Engle asked.

"Not any. She was down in my office when the thing must have been done."

"In your office, eh?" Engle grinned. "Kind of funny, you having a homicide thrown into your lap, so to say."

"I'm thinking that, right along with you," said Jerry.

In a few moments Pash arrived. So did the photographers, and later the police medico. While they were going through their motions, Pash talked.

"How do you come to be in this, Mooney?" he asked.

"There's some of it FBI business," said Jerry. "And I think they ought to be called in."

"If you don't mind," said Pash in his usual biting fashion, "I'll be the judge of that. So let's hear your story. And you might as well tell about this girl as you go along."

Jerry always found Pash rather a heavy person to handle; the scornful beak of a nose, the big, prying lenses astride it, the bitter tongue, the constant suspicion and disbelief made him a trying person.

"As I've seen it, the thing begins with the girl," said Jerry. "And so the story is hers, not mine." He knew the homicide captain very well; the man's animosity toward him was deep and eager. Jerry believed Pash would go to any length to get him in a position in which the Department would have a free hand with him. But it was necessary to say something, and he gave a sharply abridged version of what he'd heard, and a sketchy account of what he'd seen.

"What's your name?" asked Pash of the girl.

"Elsie Homer," she said with an effort.

"What became of this night superintendent?" the man asked Jerry.

"I wouldn't know. The last I saw of him, he was what is known as hastening downstairs."

"Huh! It's queer he'd run out on you like that."

"That's what I thought," said Jerry. "Maybe it'd be a good idea to put a man or two on him."

Pash gave him a nasty look.

"Why didn't you call the police when the girl first came to you?"

"Up to the time we got to this office, it looked like a private case. I called you as soon as I knew it was something else."

"It takes a murder to get you started, does it?"

"All right," replied Jerry. "It's still a murder; let's see how nice and quick you'll get going."

Pash's look was thick with disbelief.

"You've always got a trick up your sleeve," he said. "How much are you holding back?"

"Only my own ideas of the thing, that's all. I know how you treat anything I think of, so I never bother to hand you any unfinished business."

"I'm going to run you through in the morning," said Pash, glowering. "You be at Headquarters, no later than ten."

"It'll all depend on how fast the FBI works," said Jerry cheerfully. "They sometimes take quite a while listening. I might be delayed."

"You always have some kind of a twist, don't you?" said Pash with a sardonic grin.

"It's wartime; and some things come before others."

"Murder's pretty important," the Captain suggested.

"Yeah, but you have them every other day," replied Jerry. "They fit into the routine."

The police medico had been examining the girl.

"This might be a hospital case," he said. "And she's for there right away."

An ambulance was called for; it arrived and the girl was taken away. Pash then had the man who ran the night elevator up for questioning.

"You saw a light in this office earlier tonight, I hear?"

"Yes, I did."

"How long ago?"

"About an hour or so."

"Is that usual?"

"Lately it is. Darrow's have a lot of hurry-up Government work, I hear. Besides that, they are having some repair work done. Workmen are in there some nights."

"Did you, at any time past the usual closing-time tonight, bring up any one you didn't know to this floor?"

"No sir. The only people I brought up since that time were Miss Homer, the girl who has just been sent to the hospital, and Mr Mooney I know them both."

"You didn't bring up anyone after that?"

"No sir."

"Are you forgetting you brought up the night superintendent?"

"I didn't bring him up. Mr. Mooney asked me to, but he wasn't in the building. I was told that he'd sent in word in the afternoon that he wasn't well. I was asking around for someone who might be acting in his place when the police came in."

Pash looked at Jerry, his mouth drawn to one side in a crooked smile.

"What about that, Mooney?"

Jerry spoke to the elevator operator.

"You didn't bring the night superintendent up?"

"No sir. Like I was just saying, he wasn't in the building."

"What kind of a looking man is he?"

"Well, he's about medium size; and he's pretty bald. And he's a little lame in his left foot."

Jerry looked at Pash.

"Not the same party. The one I talked with was tall—he was thin and nervous looking. And he had a full head of hair. I'd say he was less than forty years old."

"Mr. Hooker, the night boss, is more than sixty," said the elevator operator.

Pash laughed, and it had an ugly sound of gratification in it.

"So the party that opened the office door and afterward ran out on you was not the night man of the building but a stranger." He looked at Engle. "Begins to be interesting, doesn't it?"

"It's surely countin' up," agreed the assistant. "You missed one there, Mooney."

"I think," said Pash to Jerry with enjoyment, "I'm going to do something special on you tomorrow. So get in early. It looks like there'll be a thing or two going on."

Chapter Three

Mooney had a cocktail at a neighboring bar, also a sandwich and a glass of ale. Then he went back to his office. He called Mickey on the telephone.

"About that girl who came in awhile ago," he said: "You might have the police on your telephone about her; if so, say as little as possible."

"Something has happened?" asked Mickey, noting sharpness in his voice.

"That young fellah Freddy Locke, that she talked about: when we got to Darrow's office, he was dead."

Mickey drew in her breath sharply

"Oh, no!" she cried.

"I've called you to ask you not to mention anything the girl said about the drawing. I'm going to talk with the FBI in a few minutes. It's a case for them, and they don't like the police mixing in."

"I understand," said Mickey.

"If Pash or any of his people call you, tell how the girl came in, frightened. But you don't know anything else—because you went home a little while afterward."

A few minutes later Jerry had the local FBI headquarters on the wire and talked with Dave Shugrue, one of the operators whom he knew.

"There's been a killing done in this building," he told Shugrue. "The police are on it, but it has Federal angles that might interest your department. How'd you like to step around to my office and listen awhile?"

"All right, Jerry. I'll be there in a half-hour."

Mooney put the telephone down, pulled his chair up close to his desk, got out a block of paper and a pencil and began drawing circles—large circles. Then some that were smaller; later some that were smaller still. This continued until he was making some so small that they were hardly more than dots. He ruminated for a while over what he'd done; then he drew quite a wide circle; he drew another inside this, and still another inside that. He continued to draw circles one inside the other until the original was a solid mass, its former emptiness clogged with reductions.

Then he began a row of circles, each succeeding one growing smaller. They stood sharp and round in a long line, a big one at the left, a very small one at the right. Into this uninfluenced space created by repeated zeros his thin store of information was slowly trickling:

A girl. A young man. Engaged to be married. They work in the same place. Closely kept Federal work.

The young man talks where and when he shouldn't. A proposition is made to him, and he's scared. Then he is threatened.

The boy had nerve and said no. But the girl was shortsighted. She picked the matter up and carried it midway. Then she too grew scared, and tried to run out of it.

"That's how it stood when I first heard about it," Jerry summed up. "From then on, I'm not sure. But there are a few things I'm looking at.

"When the girl discovered the drawing wasn't in her handbag she at once suspected Freddy had it.

"My guess is that she *did* go out of the room where she'd been talking to Freddy. Also that she'd been saying so much that he'd begun to suspect something; and while she was gone, he opened the bag she'd left behind her, and found the drawing.

"She left the office, thinking she still had it, and with the intention of trading it in for enough silence to marry on. But while she didn't know Freddy had taken the drawing, someone else did—someone who wanted it badly enough to snap the boy's life out to get it," decided Jerry. "Someone who was in the office at the time, saw him take it from the girl's handbag and knew what it was."

Jerry continued the rounding of zeros on the block of paper. He made a complete circle of them, and in that circle he saw the tall, thin man whom he'd thought to be the night superintendent. Also he again heard his clipped, rather vicious habit of speech.

"What," said Jerry, "if he'd been in the office? Hidden in that room? When the girl left, he could have finished Freddy, taken the drawing and slipped away."

But he'd returned! If he'd finished with the job, why did he do that?

Jerry got up and walked the floor. After the girl had fainted, he had searched the body of the dead young man for the drawing—but he had not found it, and had thought the murderer had taken it. But when the chips were down, this sort of snap reasoning was never found in Mooney's cold, unemotional circle of zeros. Freddy might not have put the drawing in his pocket. He might have put it somewhere else. The murderer might not have found it. He might have gone away beaten. And he might have, in a sort of desperation, returned for another try.

JERRY had reached this point when there came a tap on the door; then it opened, and a man appeared.

"Good evening," the man said. "I am Jano. Baritz Jano. It is with Mr. Mooney I desire to speak."

The man was enormously fat; his face was round and boylike, and he regarded Mooney with an engaging smile.

"I'm Mooney," said Jerry, looking at him with interest. The words the man used were well formed, but he put them together oddly. These things, together with his size, seemed to stir faintly in Mooney's mind.

"It is nice that I am seeing you," said Jano. "It is, I know, after the time for business, but possible not too much after. Once before, tonight, I am here, but you are not present."

Jerry now realized who the man was. Mickey had spoken of him. He was the man the Homer girl said had followed her.

"Often I'm out," Jerry said. "But there are times I'm in. Sit down; and tell me what the trouble is."

Jano sat down.

"You are a private policeman," he said. "And there is business we may have together." There was a pause, then he added: "Myself, I am an agent of the Swiss Government. And I am written down so in the American records, as the law asks."

"If you've come here on Government business," Jerry said, "I'm telling you I'm not the party to speak to."

"It is not Government; the wish I have is to speak of murder," said Jano pleasantly. "It is of the murder that has taken place in this building tonight."

"You're also wrong in coming to me about a thing like that. The regular police attend to murders," Jerry informed him.

But Jano disregarded this.

"Murder is a stupid proceeding," he said. "A man kills; in a few hours,"—and he smiled in a shy sort of way—"he himself is killed! It is not intelligent." As Jerry did not reply to this, the man took up his subject from another angle. "The girl," he said, "would not speak to me. She was afraid." He looked at Jerry attentively. "The murder: did it happen before she came to this office, or afterward?"

"I don't know when it happened," Mooney said. "The police surgeon is always the judge of that."

Jano nodded. And he looked mildly at Jerry.

"There was a thing stolen?" he asked. "A drawing?"

"Things stolen are also the business of the police," Jerry told him.

"The girl is maybe your client? She may have mentioned something," suggested the fat man.

Jerry grinned. Jano was unusual.

"The principal thing she said was that you had been following her."

"It is true." Baritz Jano agreed to this willingly. "There were warnings I wished to speak to her. This drawing: she meant to give it to some people who are dangerous."

"How do you know that?"

Jano shrugged his great shoulders.

"A knowledge of things is my profession," he said, beaming at Jerry. "In Europe I am said to be clever." He seemed to expect an answer to this; but Jerry crossed one knee over the other, dandled his foot and was silent. "It is my thought," Jano then continued, "that the death of the young man may have something to do with the theft."

"The police are very careful in things like that," said Jerry. "Maybe if you went to them, they'd tell you something."

Jano smiled.

"I am acquainted very well with the police," he said. "And the way between us I make very wide." He studied Mooney for a few moments. "You are, I think, in business for the profit; it is also my thought that I can speak to you in a way you might understand."

"As I've said, I don't touch Government work," said Jerry. "A party who operates with a private license likes to work quietly. Government cases go off too loudly, especially at a time like this."

Jano rubbed his hands together.

"You are careful," he said. "I have always admiration for carefully done things." He arose. "It may be there will some time be something. A person, when things swiftly happen, does not know." He paused for a moment and then added: "There are large sums of money often placed where an intelligent man might reach for them." He nodded his head. "Often it is that a change of mind means much intelligence."

It was almost an hour after the departure of Jano that Shugrue arrived. He was a compact young man with a quick eye and an active mind.

"I'm sorry I've kept you waiting," he said. "But there were some things came over the wire that had to be gone into."

He sat down at the end of Jerry's desk and listened to the matters that were told. As Jerry went on, the agent's interest picked up constantly, and at the finish, he leaned back in his chair and said:

"This man Jano, I know. And as he told you, he is a foreign agent and is recorded as such. But the Swiss interest may not be all of it. Sometimes these people serve a number of governments; and we've thought that of Jano for some time."

Shugrue went into the matter of Darrow & Company. They were skillful people and had always deserved trust. They were careful; their employees had been shown on many occasions also to be trustworthy. But as Shugrue said, vigilance is not capable of forever guarding against dishonesty or treachery.

"A love-affair is likely to branch off in any direction," said Jerry. "This girl is nice looking, but none too keen; the young man knew more, but was weak. As I see it, someone's had the eye on him for some time, nursing him along for a chance at something. When he began to talk about the drawing, the spies felt they could settle for that."

"Threats, robbery, then murder," said Shugrue. "They usually follow in that order."

"I keep thinking," said Jerry, "that the thing could have been worked from the inside."

"In the Darrow office?"

"Maybe not. But inside the Tower. The things that have happened seem to work closely together. I got that impression right at the beginning. Jano's coming here increased it."

AFTER some further talk, Shugrue left, Jerry saying he'd keep in touch with him. A little later Mooney closed his office door after him for the night and rang for the elevator. It was operated by the same man who'd taken him up with the girl just before the discovery of the murder.

"A lot of things keep happening, don't they?" the man said.

"Sometimes they do," Jerry returned as the car descended.

"That Christie was always a funny kind of bird," said the operator. "But I never expected to hear a thing like this about him."

"Christie?" said Jerry.

The car was now at the street level, but the man didn't open the door.

"Aint you heard about it?" he asked. "Christie, one of the men in the building maintenance department, was found dead in a side-street about a half hour ago. Somebody'd shot him.

Word's come in that they've got him in the morgue."

Outside, Jerry called a cab, and he told the driver, who knew him:

"Take me to the morgue."

The driver grinned and said:

"Private cops certainly do some funny visiting."

When they'd pulled up at the city dead-house, Jerry told the man to wait. Then he went inside.

"Hello, Jerry," said an attendant. "Glad to see you. Is it business or pleasure?"

"There's a body I want to see. Must have been just brought in. A man. And shot."

"Oh! You interested in him? Yes, we've got him. Right in there, at the end of the row."

The attendant led Jerry deep into the place. At the end of a long line of shrouded shapes he paused. Drawing back the covering, he said:

"Here he is."

Jerry gazed into the face, gray with death, the thin-lipped, bitter-looking mouth twisted into a sort of grin. And as he stood there, the words of Jano, spoken only a short time before, came into his mind.

"A man kills. An hour later, he is himself killed."

Mooney motioned the man that he'd seen enough, and turned away. In the office he took up the telephone, called FBI headquarters and asked for Shugrue.

"Mooney again," he said. "I'm calling from the morgue. I've been looking at a man brought in awhile ago. It's the party I told you about—who opened the door of the office for the Homer girl and myself. He's been shot in the chest—and is very dead."

Chapter Four

IT was about nine o'clock next morning when Jerry awoke. While he went through his calisthenics, took a shower, and dressed, his mind worked with the problem of the night before. He telephoned Police Headquarters and was put through to Pash.

"I saw the FBI people last night," he said, "and I'll be on hand this morning as soon as you like."

"Well, I'd like it right away," said Pash, in no good humor.

"In ten-fifteen minutes," said Jerry. "And while I'm on the way, there's another thing I ran into last night that you might start thinking about. Have you heard about a fellah named Christie: one of the workmen at the Etruria Tower—"

But Pash interrupted him.

"Yeah, I know. He's in the morgue."

"Well, here's something maybe you don't know: I went out there to look at him last night; and I found he was the party I told you about—the one I thought was the night superintendent at the Etruria Tower."

"The one you let slip away on you!" Jerry grinned.

"Well, if you want to put it that way—yeah," he said.

There was a silence; finally Pash said:

"All right. You get down here. And I'll see what I'm going to do."

At Police Headquarters, a little later, Jerry talked with Berg, the desk sergeant.

"The skipper is pretty sore," Berg said. "The FBI are moving in on this case, and he don't like it. There was some sharp talk between him and them awhile ago."

Shugrue came into the room a little later, and he drew Jerry aside.

"Pash is beginning to get difficult," he said. "And I want to ask you to tell as little as possible when he questions you."

"Do you know," said Jerry good-humoredly, "I had that very thought in mind. I have a fixed plan with him. When a thing's almost finished, he can be called in; but it's a mistake to tell him much as it goes along. He knows the formula for a kind of police hash, and he tries to cook everything accordingly."

"They've got the girl here; but I saw her at the hospital awhile ago," said Shugrue. "And I told her to refuse to say anything about the drawing or the attempt of these people to get hold of it. I suggested that it was Federal business, and she need not make a statement to the police at this time. She asked if the FBI would back her up, and I said it would."

"That makes it easier for me," said Jerry. "Pash'll not like any of it, but we'll not worry about that."

"And by the way," said the Federal man, "this morning I had a talk with one of our agents—one whose interest lately has been keeping an eye on Jano. And he happened to drop a bit of information that may have some meaning. Jano has an office in the Etruria Tower."

"No!" said Jerry, in surprise.

"Under the name of Sallust Frères. It's supposed to be a firm of French importers."

"That," said Mooney, "is something to keep in mind."

Pash, a little later, sent out word for Jerry to come in. When he did, the homicide captain sat huddled behind his desk and eyed him with evident disbelief.

"Mooney, I want to hear what you know," he said. "And all of it."

Jerry cheerfully repeated what he'd said the night before. But Pash wasn't satisfied. He shook a bony finger at him and yelled:

"I want what that girl told you last night: and I want all you said to her. This is murder, Mooney; you're not going to get away with a story like that."

"The girl came into my place because she knew I was a private cop," said Jerry. "She was frightened. Someone was following her. She wanted to get back to the office she worked in, on the top floor. And because she was scared, I went up with her. The rest of it followed just as I told you."

Shugrue was standing near by, and the angry eyes of Pash went to him venomously.

"This department has been suffering from an undercurrent of influence for some time," he said. "Serious harm is being done. Now, it seems, murder can be committed and the matter can be taken out of the hands of the proper authorities and nothing must be said or done about it."

A DAPPER young man with an entirely self-possessed manner, who stood at one end of the Captain's desk, now spoke.

"This matter, for the moment, has been taken out of the hands of the local police by agreement with the county attorney. Good and sufficient reasons for this transfer have been shown," said the young man, "and it is quite possible that the case will be returned to the State and county after certain ends have been served."

Jerry, when he had the opportunity, talked with Miss Homer for a few moments.

"This man who unlocked Darrow's office door for us last night—had you ever seen him before?"

"Yes, I had—in the office, talking with our Mr. Gross. I knew he was employed in the building, but nothing more than that."

Pash was outspoken in his desire to hold the girl, but the Federal attorney claimed custody.

"There is a possibility that her evidence will be necessary to the Government," said this nattily dressed young person. "If there is shown to be a reason for returning her later, it shall be done."

Jerry, leaving Headquarters, went at once to the Etruria Tower. After a glance at his mail and a few words with Mickey, he ascended to the top floor and engaged in a conversation with Mr. Gross, manager for Darrow & Company.

Gross was heavy-set, had an affable manner and talked with the readiness of an experienced man of affairs. He already had the police version of the

happening in the Darrow office, and now Jerry gave him the remainder of it.

"The whole thing has not only been shocking, but puzzling," Gross said. "But now I begin to understand."

"This man Christie," said Jerry, "what can you tell me about him?"

"As far as I know, he was employed by the Tower Company. He was a skilled workman, and bossed many of the small jobs that are so often needed to be done in a big building. My only experience with him has been in the last three or four days; we'd had some difficulty with the ventilators, and he came in to look things over. The idea was that the work was to be done after our office hours."

"Was Christie acquainted with Freddy Locke?"

"I've seen him talking with him, but thought it had something to do with the repairs. Young Locke was usually interested in what was going on around the place."

"I've looked at the hammer used in the murder," said Jerry. "It has the Etruria Tower brand on the handle."

"There were a number of tools belonging to the building in the back room. I've been told they intended finishing the work tonight."

Gross took Jerry into the room where the murder had been done. There was a policeman there, sitting in an office chair and smoking a cigar.

"Hello, Mooney," he said. "I hear the old man's mad at you."

"He always is," replied Jerry cheerfully. "But that ought to make it easy for you people. The more he swings at me, the less time he'll have to work on you."

"He seems to have lost his interest in the case," said the policeman. "I've just had word that my shift here will be the last."

"The police called off?"

"That's the idea."

JERRY saw some evidence in the room of things having been torn out and of replacements having been made. He looked at these while they talked—casually, but several times a certain thing seemed to catch his attention. Gross noted this and said:

"Some of the work is experimental. We talked about different ways of getting the result we wanted, and tried some of them out."

"Is there a way of getting out of these rooms from this rear section?" Jerry asked.

"Yes; there is a door in the room next this that opens into a side corridor. That in turns opens into the main one."

Jerry mentioned the matter of the drawing. But Gross shook his head.

"The office has been asked not to discuss that. Of course, I suppose you know about it, and because of that I'll say this to you: If it is not recovered, there are other copies accessible. The troublesome point is that if the drawing has fallen into the hands of the enemy, a very clever and useful invention will have lost most of its value."

"That is what the persons behind the thing must have had in mind," said Jerry. "But who took it? Who has it? Where is it? If Christie killed Freddy Locke to get the drawing from him, then the man who killed Christie now has it."

"But," said Gross, shaking his head, "where is that man?"

"The trick will be to find him," said Jerry. "And maybe someone'll be able to do it."

Jerry went to the office of the Etruria Tower Company after leaving Gross and got the address of the night elevator operator. The house was a narrow-fronted one on a side street; and the man had to be awakened to greet his visitor. He sat up in bed and blinked.

"I gotta do my sleeping in the daytime," he said. And then: "What's the matter? I hope nothing else has happened, Mr. Mooney."

"No; Christie was the last."

"I've heard he was in this business in Darrow's office. I'd never thought it. He was a guy that never said much."

"The real dangerous ones never do," Jerry told him. And then he said: "I came out here to ask you a couple of questions. You know it was a hammer that the job on Freddy Locke was done with?"

"Yeah; I seen it. All gummed up with blood."

"Well, what I want you to do is think back to last night. You told me you saw the Darrow office lighted up about an hour before the killing, and that you remembered it because there was the sound of hammering inside."

"Yes, there was."

"I've been told there was repair work going on there."

"Yeah; but none of the men working on that job had come up at that time. It was kind of early. I know they hadn't come up, because my car was the only one that was running. It would have been me that'd carry them."

"Have you ever had any talks with Christie?" asked Jerry.

"No. As I say, he wasn't much for conversations."

"From what I hear he was friendly with Freddy Locke."

"Well, maybe, but I don't know about that. The only ones in the tower I could say he was sociable with was these people on the ninth floor—Sallust Frères."

"He was chatty with them?"

"Anyway, he went in there once in a while."

Mooney talked with the man for a space and then left. When he reached his office, Mickey was out getting lunch, and the place was in charge of Ates Haley, the office boy.

"What's happening?" Jerry asked.

"You had Headquarters on the telephone twice," Ates told him. "Captain Pash is a-honin' to see you. And if you know anybody by the name of Jano, *he* wants you too. He said to call him. The telephone is Middle City 0098."

"Call that number and say I'm now in the office," said Jerry. "Then take fifteen minutes—no more—for a sandwich and a glass of milk. When you are through, hang around where you can see this door and not call any attention to yourself. When you see a fat man leave here, follow him. As soon as you make up your mind he's not coming back soon, telephone me from wherever you are, and let me know." Jerry looked at Ates inquiringly. "Have you got all that?"

THE boy ran over all the items in these orders to Jerry's satisfaction. Then he took up the telephone and called Middle City 0098.

"This is Mr. Mooney's office," he said. "Mr. Mooney is now here and will be pleased to see Mr. Jano."

Ates put down the telephone and departed for a neighboring lunch-counter. Then Mooney called Police Headquarters. When he got Pash, that official began to speak in his most strident tones:

"I didn't have a chance to speak to you before you left," he said. "And what I want to say is that I'm not letting the FBI or any other outfit crowd me off this case. I'm still on it. Also I'm telling you if you get anything, I want to hear about it, and I want you and everybody else to know that the Government side of the thing isn't the only one. I insist on having the right to judge what belongs to the police and what does not."

"Have you passed that word on to the Federals?" asked Jerry.

"Never you mind about the Federals," said Pash heatedly. "The one thing you've got to remember is that you operate on a license, and that license wasn't given to you by the Federals. Keep that in your mind, or you'll get yourself in trouble."

"What I've got in mind just now," said Jerry, "is more along the line of who killed Freddy Locke, and this party Christie. And the only thing I ask of you is to be a little bit cooperative."

Pash gave a sort of yelp at this.

"Don't forget, this is the established police you're dealing with," he said.

"And we are expecting coöperation from *you*."

"All right," said Jerry, "I don't care which way you head it; the idea is to get it done. If you want to start doing that, give a listen to what I'm going to ask you."

"What is it?"

Jerry then spoke no more than two dozen words; but they were in a tone which Pash had heard on more than one important occasion and to which he always gave attention.

"What am I to expect will come of this?" he asked when Mooney had finished.

"Just now," returned Jerry, "I can tell you nothing. But when I'm ready to step in for the killing, you'll be there to do your stuff."

"All right," said Pash. "Only, I don't like stepping into anything blindfolded."

"You'll not be blind when you begin to go," said Jerry. "Do what I ask, and then wait until I call you. From that moment, you'll begin to know."

"When will you call?"

"I can't say. It may be in ten minutes—maybe not until tomorrow. Only, have patience and don't grump; I've got to wait myself until the thing begins to open."

After he'd put down the telephone, Jerry smoked a cigarette.

Then there was a hand on the door of the outer office, and he heard the voice of Baritz Jano. He called to the man to come in, which he did, softly and easily for all his bulk.

"It is a thing most satisfying to see you once more," he said. "I have called you several times on the telephone, but you were not here."

"Business," said Jerry. "As I've said, it keeps me moving in and out."

"Energy is a pleasing thing! And you have much of it." Jano nodded his big head. "That is why I wish to so employ your services." He was silent for a moment, and then said: "In the newspapers this morning it is told of another man who was found dead."

"Shot," said Jerry. "Through the body."

"It is unfortunate," said Jano. "I tried to have it not happen."

Jerry lifted his brows.

"You knew murder was going to be done?"

"Things come to me out of nowhere. But at that time I did not think of Christie. It was the girl I feared would be killed. I tried to warn her, as you know."

"But why should they want to kill her? For the drawing? She was intending to give it to them."

Jano smiled.

"Maybe not to them?"

"I get from that," Jerry said, "that there might be two groups. And it might account for Christie being counted off."

"Of Christie I have small knowledge," said Jano. "The sudden deaths of such men are often strange. He may have been a traitor. Someone may have paid him sums of money to get the drawing for them. And underneath he may have planned to get it for himself."

"But he didn't get it," said Jerry. "As you know, the girl never reached him—if it was Christie she was to meet. More than that, I happen to know that when she left this building last night, she didn't have the drawing with her."

Jano sat smiling at him. And Jerry, as he smoked a cigarette, fancied that for all the beaming quality of this it had a quality that told of sudden interest.

"I do not understand," said the man. "It was an engagement that was made She went to keep it. If she had not the drawing—why?"

JERRY shook the ash from his cigarette.

"Well," he said, "she thought she had it. After she'd told me her story last night, here in this room, she still thought so. But when she opened her handbag to get it, the drawing was not there." Jano sat upright in his chair, his big body motionless. "She was frightened when she found the thing was missing," continued Jerry. "And she thought Freddy Locke, her boy friend, might have suspected she had it in the bag, and had taken it, not telling her he'd done so.

"I went with her to the Darrow office," said Jerry. "Freddy sometimes worked there after hours. But we found the place dark. Then we saw Christie in the corridor."

"Christie!" said Jano. "Ah, yes."

"We'd asked for the night superintendent; I thought Christie was the man and asked him to open the door."

"Why?"

"There was a thought in my mind," said Jerry. "Anyway, he refused to do it. But I spoke of having the police in; then he unlocked the door. The girl found the body of Freddy in the rear room. Christie knew it was there; he knew it would be found. That's why he didn't want to open the door; that's also why he ran out on us when he did open it."

"I remember reading," Jano said thoughtfully, "that this young man Locke was killed by a blow of a hammer."

"He was; and the hammer was right there. You see," explained Jerry, "there had been some workmen doing repairs; they hadn't finished, and their tools were still there." He pondered for a space. "A funny part of it was a thing said by the elevator operator," he told Jano. "It seems to me it means something, but I don't know what."

"A funny thing? You mean a strange one?"

"Yes. It was after business hours at Darrow's—last night. The lights were on, showing that someone was still there. The workmen who had been doing the repairs had not yet appeared; and yet, so the elevator operator said, there was the sound of hammering."

There was a short silence after this. Jano sat with his head sunken on his bulging chest; his body was shaking.

"Anything wrong?" asked Jerry solicitously.

The man roused himself.

"No; I am well. Do not fear. But these things which you tell me are disturbing." As he got to his feet, he covered his face with his hands, and again his huge body shook. In a little while, however, he grew more composed. "The air," he said, "will do me good. I shall go out." He beamed suddenly at Jerry. "I am pleased and grateful," he said. "I shall see you perhaps tomorrow; we will talk once more of these things. There may be then some solution."

Jerry waited for a few minutes after the man had gone; then called Shugrue.

After that, Ates came bustling in.

"I didn't have to move a step away from the building," he said, elated. "I saw the fat man come out, and went down in the elevator with him. When he got outside he called a cab and I heard him tell the driver he wanted to go to the Spencer House. And he went."

"Fair enough," said Jerry. He called Pash once more.

"The thing's moving fast," he said. "Just when we'll close in, I don't know. It depends on a couple of matters I must take a chance on. But there's a thing I want you to do right away. I've heard you are going to take the police guard out of the Darrow office, and—"

"Why should we keep a man there?" interrupted Pash sourly. "With the FBI taking over everything else, let them take that job, too."

"I'm asking you as a favor," said Jerry, "to call the newspapers and tell them the police are now out of the office of Darrow & Company. And to make no mention of the Federals. Also to call right away so the news'll have time to get into the evening editions." Pash was inclined to protest, but Jerry talked him down. "This thing will keep," Jerry said. "And all the more if there's no delay. We've got it going, and now's the time to start riding it." . . .

The office force at Darrow & Company had left some time before, and the night shadows were gradually fill-

ing the rooms when Jerry Mooney unlocked the door to the main office and went in. He turned on a light, closed the door behind him and made sure the catch had shot into place. Then he went into the rear office of Gross, the manager. Here he left the door partly open. There was another door to the office; this gave access to the rear room where the body of Freddy Locke had been found. This he set partly open, the same as the other. He made sure where the light-switches were in each room, and then he went to the main office and sat down.

The shadows gradually thickened into a deep dark. There was no moon that night, and the rays of the street lamps did not reach as far as the top floor of the Etruria Tower. The hum of night traffic lifted with a steady monotony; the horns of motorcars sounded their never-ending announcements. An hour passed—two hours.

Jerry every now and then shifted in his chair to make the wait easier. He sat up straight so that he'd have no support for his back. Experience had shown him that comfort must be avoided in a vigil of this kind if the senses were to be kept sharp and drowsiness kept away. A few times he got to his feet and stretched himself this way and that. Then he quietly sat down again.

Chapter Five

FOR a time the elevator could be heard, but its trips up and down gradually grew less frequent; in the third hour there were long intervals of silence. It was during one of these that Jerry heard a sound in the corridor. He listened intently. Someone was standing at the door of the main office; he could hear breathing—deep, labored breathing, as though the person had been toiling up long flights of stairs. Jerry arose like a shadow, and slipped behind the door leading into the main office. He put one eye to the opening between the door and the frame and watched. There was a pause; then a ray, thin as a pencil, shot across the floor and began to creep around the room. This finally lighted up the doorway at the rear, the door through which Jerry had passed the night before when he'd come upon the sobbing girl kneeling beside the body of the murdered young man.

The holder of the light began slowly moving toward this door. The light pointed downward at his feet for a moment; as it did so, the rays struck upward from the floor and Jerry saw a bulky shape that could belong to but one person: Jano!

The man, moving with that soft tread so often noted in people of great weight, disappeared into the rear room. And then Jerry noiselessly shifted his own ground to a place behind the other door of the office in which he'd stationed himself. Again, in the same way, he had a view of the traveling pencil of light. It went waveringly here and there in the rear room. Finally it touched the litter of workmen's tools which Jerry had noticed that morning at one side of the office. It held there for a few moments, and again began to travel. It picked up the spots in the wall and around the windows where the repair work had been going on. Places were shown where old work had been taken out, and others where new work had been put in. Backward and forward the slender rod of light went, and again it came to a halt; after a few moments there came a whispering of satisfaction from Jano.

The man's shape, bulking hugely in the dim light, stooped over the heap of tools. Jerry saw him select a claw-ended steel bar. He put the hand torch carefully down so that its rays would fall on a piece of planking which seemed to have been nailed to a part of the work for some purpose. He put the end of the bar under this and began to pry it loose. The nails were drawn loose; the bit of timber was caught as it fell, and the watching eyes of Jerry saw a sheet of drawing-paper fall to the floor.

Instantly Jerry switched on the light. With an exclamation, Jano twisted his great body around; he seemed to be groping in the breast of his coat for a weapon; but just then there was the sound of an opening door and Shugrue and Pash appeared.

"On the floor, there," said Jerry to the Federal agent, and pointed to the sheet of paper. "That's the thing you want."

Jano's hands dropped to his sides; he watched Shugrue pick up the paper, his great face blank. He stood motionless while Pash snapped the handcuffs on his wrists. Then he turned his eyes on Jerry. Gradually the blank expression faded out; the boyish eyes beamed.

"For one, two hours I had lost the confidence. I thought my judgment of people was no longer good. I had looked at you and thought you shrewd. Then you talked like a fool; you told me everything, and I thought you did not know you were doing it. But it was a trap—a trap so excellent that I, Baritz Jano, walked into it." He laughed, his great body shook. "I am pleased. My judgment is still good. You are what I thought you were when I first saw you."

"Why," said Mickey Sayre, when Jerry told her about this the next day, "he seems to think it better to have good judgment than his liberty."

"It's not only his liberty he's going to lose. It's his life. Shugrue made a visit to the office of Sallust Frères yesterday when I reported to him that Jano had gone out. He found a revolver. The Federal laboratory test showed it was the one Christie had been killed with. And Jano's fingerprints were all over it."

"OH!" said Mickey, awed. "It's really dreadful, isn't it?"

"Jano has admitted he did it. You see, Christie was a kind of stooge for him, and he'd been planted in the Etruria Tower, knowing that sooner or later they'd get a chance at something valuable in the Darrow office. Christie got acquainted with Freddy; they'd gone out together often.

"But when the man finally got hold of the drawing, after killing Freddy, he made up his mind he wouldn't turn it over to Jano; he'd hold it for a big price from someone higher up. Evidently he was afraid to take it with him when he'd done the murder; if he was caught with it on him, it was sure evidence against him. So he nailed up the section of planking in the office, with the drawing under it—meaning to get it at a later time.

"But Jano suspected him. He'd found out, somehow, that the man was double-crossing him. So he finished him off, as we've seen. He was still in Darrow's office when I got there with the girl. He'd appeared by way of that side corridor."

"I think it was awfully clever of you to guess where the drawing was hidden," said Mickey, admiringly.

"It wasn't a guess," said Mooney. "I noticed the way the piece of board was nailed to the rest of the stuff. It didn't mean anything that I could see; it wasn't supporting or holding anything together. So why was it there? I was talking to Gross at the time. And as I looked at it, I remembered what the elevator operator had said about hearing hammering in Darrow's office at a time when he knew none of the workmen were there. And that gave me the idea."

"But," said Mickey, "why didn't you look and make sure?"

"At first I was going to," replied Jerry, "but then I began to see what I might use it for, and I let it ride for a while, just as it was. I played dumb with Jano, telling things that led up to it, saying it must mean something. He laughed," said Jerry. "I could see his whole body shake. Me being such a simp, as he thought, gave him a lot of amusement." Jerry grinned and nodded his head. "He didn't know it, but I wanted to laugh too."

The Doctor's Fee

Mastiffs, they were—big and knowing dogs; and they did not believe the report that their young master was lost when his plane went down in the North Sea.

by WILLIAM ARTHUR BREYFOGLE

WHEN the first Trefayre came "up to England," out of Cornwall, he brought the big dogs with him. They were mastiffs, and the breed is uncommon now. Their usefulness passed with the days of bear-baiting; but the Trefayres clung to them, as they clung to anything that was old. The Trefayres had their roots so deep in English earth, in England's immemorial past, that Anglo-Saxons were as newcomers and upstarts to them. They were Celtic—dark and slim and short. And wherever the Celt goes, his legends go with him. The Trefayres, for example, had a legend that their big dogs howled for the death of any male of the house.

Dr. Peter Trefayre took what comfort he could from that. It was ten days now since Edward had been reported missing, on a flight over the North Sea; but the dogs hadn't howled. Logically, Dr. Trefayre knew that his son must be dead; but still, the dogs gave no sign. They padded about their kennels, indifferent to anyone but Peter Trefayre himself, and not demonstrative even to him. The dogs might know. It was his prayer, rather than his reasoned belief.

The family had lived in the East Coast town for seven generations without losing their aloof, alien quality. Landowning gentry once, they had seen their holdings and their fortunes shrink. One ancestor had been too fond of the gaming-table; but chiefly it was the result of taxation and succession-duties. When Peter Trefayre was a young man, he had turned to medicine for a career. That way, he could still keep the old manor-house, with two or three acres of lawn and garden. The horses were all gone, but the big dogs still roamed about the flagged stableyard, where the Doctor kept his car.

The Trefayres had their own kind of loyalty—a deep and secret passion for the England that had been theirs before recorded history began. They had done their share of fighting in England's wars, as the hall of Cornwall House showed, with its collection of weapons, old and new. Peter Trefayre himself had spent four years in a field-hospital in France when he was a young doctor. His son had joined the Royal Air Force at the beginning of this new war. Edward was an only child, and Peter's wife was dead. All his hopes and most of his interests had been centered upon the boy, and the *"Missing"* was a harder report to bear, with its edge of torturing uncertainty, than "Killed in Action" would have been.

Dr. Trefayre did his best to fill the aching emptiness of his days, after the official telegram had come. He didn't change outwardly. Erect and gray and slim, he visited his patients as usual, and he had had himself put on call in case of an air raid. He told himself that it was gross superstition to

Illustrated by John Costigan, N. A.

try to take comfort from the fact that the mastiffs had not howled. They knew nothing, and could know nothing, of his loss. He grew impatient of the huge brutes, and thought of getting rid of them. Being a Trefayre, he didn't.

In a way, the boy's death was easier to bear in these distracted times. And easier, too, because he had to try to comfort Sylvia Townsend. She had been engaged to marry Edward, and she had come into Dr. Trefayre's office when Miss Scarlett, his nurse and assistant for ten years, went off to London to help with the war. Sylvia had no training, until he taught her the rudiments of what she had to know. But it was all but impossible to find a fully qualified nurse, and the girl had begged for the place—to have something to do. Because she might be needed at any hour of the day or night, she lived at Cornwall House. Mrs. Bakely, the housekeeper, pronounced her a dear.

Because it was kindly intended, Mrs. Bakely's voluble, tearful comfort went unrebuked. "It fair breaks my 'eart to watch 'im," she told Sylvia. "Not a tear, not a word, like the fine gentleman 'e is! The only time I see the 'urt in his eyes, it's when 'e's lookin' at you. And yet, I know what 'e thought o' Mister Edward; and I can tell what must go on in 'is mind. Ah, it's cruel, it's cruel! That 'Itler! If I 'ad my 'ands on 'im for a bit, I could die content!"

All over England, there were houses as unhappy as theirs. All over England, tragedy stalked unimpeded. There was a night when motors droned overhead, not a mile from Cornwall House, and the bombs came whistling down. Dr. Trefayre and Sylvia got no sleep that night. When it was over at last, they had attended twenty victims. Seven of these died afterward.

English herself, the girl was frightened by the cold fury that possessed Dr. Trefayre that night. But why shouldn't he rage? These were the men who, directly or indirectly, had caused the death of his son; he thought of it that way, schooling himself. Some of them were sons of the men whose work he had seen himself, twenty-five years ago, and done his best to undo. Worst of all, their airplanes polluted the skies over England, holy to anyone with Celtic blood. That was something a Saxon would scarcely understand.

Later, trying to look at it objectively, Dr. Trefayre was astonished himself by his capacity for hatred. At his age, with his training and all that he had seen of the way of the world—as a young interne in a big London hospital, in France, and afterward. Certainly, a doctor knew the worst about mankind. It might leave him cynical or tolerant, but he knew! He had no illusions even about his own people, the objects of his ministry. If he saw bravery and humor in unexpected places, he also knew the depths to which human life can descend. But it was all life, at least; and life, on any terms, was what a doctor was sworn to serve. What he saw now, night after night in the skies over England, was life's negation—a groping, mechanical death. It, or something like it, had taken his own son's life.

Except briefly, in the cold beam of searchlights, you never saw the thing that struck at you. It might have been a disembodied evil spirit, but for the horrible damage it wrought upon what had been a sleepy town on the East Coast, and upon the once-peaceful country round about that town. Walls that had stood mellowing for centuries went down as if kicked by a giant boot. There were improbable craters in fields where potatoes and cabbages had grown. For no good reason, Dr. Trefayre remembered a cat with its belly blown open, lying in the middle of the road. There was a scrap of bright ribbon about its neck, that some child might have tied there. It was not reasonable, but he thought of that cat rather than of the humans. The cat had had nothing to do with this war.

HE thought about Sylvia Townsend, too. There must be thousands like her, and there would be many more thousands before the war ended. In her case, the casualty, which would not appear on any official list, was a lifetime's happiness. What had been lost was her chance of living with the man she loved. Now she had a wry choice between taking second-best and living alone until she died. To judge from what he saw, she hadn't fully understood that yet. The worst of her pain would begin when she did understand. . . .

That night the raiders came early, and were gone shortly after midnight. Dr. Trefayre waited for a call, but none came. Evidently the objective had been farther inland, or else the new guns mounted in the town had done their work well. At one o'clock, the Doctor was thinking of bed.

And at one o'clock, contrary to all custom, Mrs. Bakely came in and asked to speak to him. Her high state of excitement was even more disastrous than usual to her aspirates. "It's me boy, Tom, sir," she burst out. " 'E's been an' found I don't know what! 'E's come to tell me, sir, an' 'e wants me to ask what 'e'd best do. One o' them 'Uns, it is, sir, one o' that 'Itler's lot! 'Urt, Tom says, an' lyin' up in a bit o' woods. Tom come on 'im when 'e was—well, passin' that way. What's to do, sir?"

LIKE as not, Tom Bakely had been bent on snaring rabbits in those woods, when he came upon this greater quarry. The Doctor could guess what had happened. One of the German airplanes had been hit, and the pilot had come down by parachute. He was wounded, according to Mrs. Bakely. Dying, it might be.

These thoughts passed through his head very quickly. He got up. "I'll go and have a look," he said. "Tom can show me the way. Sylvia, perhaps you'd better get the operating-table ready while I'm gone. We may need it."

Tom Bakely had a poacher's sure and silent way in the woods. He led the Doctor into a thick coppice of stunted beech, and stopped. " 'Ere, sir," he said. " 'E won't ha' moved, from what I saw."

The Doctor had brought a flashlight, and he switched it on. The effect was startling. He was standing not a yard from the German pilot, and the white young face seemed to leap at him, out of the darkness and the night-smelling undergrowth. Dr. Trefayre bent down, half-choking with his sudden excitement. This was the first enemy he had seen with his own eyes, had in his own power. This might be his chance to avenge Edward's death.

It would be a fair exchange! The German was only a boy—not older than Edward, certainly, though he wore the Iron Cross on his tunic. He was badly wounded, and burned. You could reconstruct, from his injuries, what must have happened. His airplane had been hit with a burst of fire, which accounted for the gaping wound in his upper leg and the long furrow in his scalp. It had caught fire, burning his hands and face. But in spite of all that, he had jumped, come to earth unobserved—his parachute, lying near, was of dark cloth—and even stayed conscious long enough to make an effort to bind up his wounds.

The clumsy bandages were a supreme irony. Here was the agent of death, trying to ward off death from himself! But Trefayre's eyes were merciless and hard. If a doctor served life, why should he waste his time and his skill on an agent of death?

None the less, his trained eyes had betrayed him into the beginning of interest. It was a pretty problem, as arresting a challenge as any practitioner could ask. He would have to reckon with shock, loss of blood, burns—and fear. Everything was against this boy. It would need a skill and patience amounting to genius to pull him through. The Doctor's eyes fell on the bandages again. As irony went, it would be not a bad irony to snatch from death one of the agents of death!

His mind dealt with these fancies—half thought and half emotion—in a flash. He hated Germans and the cause they served, most bitterly. But he had been a doctor longer than he had been a hater of Germans. He turned his head, without rising from his crouching position.

"Tom!" he said.

" 'Ere, sir!"

"Run down to my house and tell them to give you the stretcher. Hurry back here with it."

"Who'll I get, sir, to 'elp carry it?"

"Nobody. I'll take one end. Hurry Tom!"

His interest in the case deepened and grew while Tom Bakely was away, while his skilled fingers put the rough bandages straight and while he was loosening the tunic at the boy's throat. Once the German groaned a little, but without opening his eyes. The Doctor got the flow of blood stopped, from the wound in his leg, and saw that the bone was broken. But there was not a great deal he could do, there in the dark woods. It was time wasted, except as it gave him leisure to determine that he would spend all his ability to save this boy. If only they could keep him alive until they got him down to the surgery! When he heard Tom Bakely hurrying up with the stretcher, the Doctor drew a long breath of relief.

Now, in a few minutes—

IT was more than a few minutes, and the drag of the broad strap on his shoulders made it seem longer than it was. They walked carefully, to spare their patient all the pain they could. On the way down from the woods, the Doctor had no time for general reflections. He was concerned with the details of what he must do—or what he could do—to help this desperately wounded boy. At the best, it would be touch-and-go. If there was any least flaw in the German's heart, if his whole system didn't fight hard for the rare privilege of staying alive, the best Dr. Trefayre could do wouldn't help him. But that was a chance to be taken. If this fellow lasted out the night—

Except briefly, in the

He was still alive, but precariously so, when they laid him on the table in the surgery. He was still alive when Dr. Trefayre came out of the washroom, having scrubbed his hands until they were pink and glowing. He was still alive when the Doctor bent over him, with Sylvia opposite. That was the measure of their triumph, so far: he was still alive.

This was something the Doctor understood thoroughly, and he lost himself in the precise details. How little chloroform would keep the German boy from awaking into agony? How much dared the Doctor give him, without running the risk of sending his patient into a sleep that would know no waking? He measured it, drop by drop, until he was satisfied.

cold beam of searchlights, you never saw the thing that struck at you.

Then he bent to his work.

It was interspersed with thoughts that helped the ache of Edward's loss more than any hatred could. From her face, when he caught glimpses of it, the same thoughts ran in Sylvia Townsend's mind. She was pale and intent, absorbed in what he gave her to do. The patient might just as well have been English as German, might just as well have been Edward as some unknown boy from across the Rhine. It was good psychology, then, as well as good religion, that you could not fight hatred with hatred, that you had to combat a narrow, fanatical loyalty with a wider, tolerant loyalty. The way to conquer your enemies was to treat them as your allies in a common fight—age-old, unsparing, and far more important than any fight between nation and nation. It wasn't only a man's life Dr. Trefayre had to save, but his own integrity, his own purpose. He took his fee in vision and in inward peace.

If the vision should blur, or the steady hand shake ever so little, who could blame the Doctor? He had done a long day's work before he undertook this case. But his hands were as quick and light and strong as a lapidary's. He got the bone set in the boy's thigh, and the ugly wound there bandaged. He patched up the long crease in the scalp, and treated the burns on hands and face. He had his fingers on the faint pulse every few minutes, estimating how much more the tortured body could stand. The least carelessness might have been fatal, but Dr. Trefayre was never careless.

When it was over at last, and they had moved the German pilot from the operating-table to a cot in the adjoining room, he knew that he had never done better work. Whatever happened now, he had nothing with which to reproach himself. Now they could only wait and see.

He waited in his office, with the doors open between the place where he sat and the cot where the German lay. He waited, fighting off drowsiness and wishing that morning might come.

At three o'clock the sirens sounded again from the town, a scant mile away, and he heard the barking of

anti-aircraft guns. The Doctor acknowledged that only by a slight grimace. If they needed him, they would send for him. If they didn't send, he had a job to do here.

Every half-hour he went in to feel the fair head and try the boy's pulse. It might go either way, Dr. Trefayre knew. But still the German clung stubbornly to life, in a way that compelled his reluctant admiration. He was getting restless now, as the anesthetic began to wear off, and he muttered broken phrases. Dr. Trefayre's German was rusty, but he understood some of the words: *"Ja, es hat doch ein Ende! Noch eine Stunde und 's ist vorbei. Die Engländer, auch—"* The fair head turned on the pillow, and the lips were dry and hot. *"Ja,"* the boy said, *"wenn 'mal Friede kommt—"*

WHEN peace came, what then? The Doctor's thin face was impassive, but his thoughts were bitter. A staggering burden of debt, for all nations on earth! A mountain of bitterness it would take generations to outlive! A lonely old age for him, in an England that one who loved it would scarcely be able to recognize. And for this boy here on the cot, a Germany beaten again—the Doctor had never doubted that—a Germany bled white, ripe for any folly. That was what came of a war; that, and the uncounted human agony. It must have taken years of effort, the best of brains of a nation, to perfect the bomber that had succeeded in disemboweling that wretched cat he could not forget. That was what a war did, if anyone wanted to know. That was as far as your ticket entitled you to ride; that was where you got off. Near enough the end of the line, too! You couldn't go very much farther.

He went in to stand by the cot again, more because he was restless himself than because he was worried about his patient. The boy was asleep now, with a dew of perspiration on his forehead that the Doctor found reassuring. His pulse was stronger, and it seemed a natural sleep. Now, if nothing happened, he ought to make a good recovery. He was one of the lucky ones. . . .

Dawn had come up over warring Europe, though the Doctor noticed it only now. He put out the lights and drew back the curtains, letting the uncertain daylight in. Then suddenly he stopped, with his hand on the curtain-cord. It took him a moment to identify the sound as the baying of the big dogs, in the stableyard.

Whatever courage he still had left him, at that sound. He had not known until then how much his subconscious mind had relied upon the dogs' instinct, the childish old legend. The baying went on, growing louder and more mournful, and he looked down upon the face of this German boy whose life he had saved. It wouldn't take much to be done with him, even now! For what it was worth, he could do that much to square accounts, before he went out and silenced the dogs. No one would know. He could say that the pilot had died of his wounds. So might all England's enemies die, and her green land be left in peace!

HE had sent Sylvia to her room, to get what rest she could. But she came in now, in a wrapper, her eyes oddly wide and bright. "I heard the dogs," she said, and collapsed suddenly on a straight chair. "Oh, I heard the dogs, and—"

Dr. Trefayre bent over her. "There child! It doesn't make it any worse, does it? It's only what we already knew. About the dogs, it's only a foolish old story. I'm going to have them done away with. You won't have to listen to them any more."

"You don't understand!" the girl cried, and held out a slip of paper to him. "I heard the dogs, and went down; and it was a messenger-boy that had made them bark. It's from Edward, and he's safe, at Grimsby! A trawler picked him up, and he's only now got ashore. They're giving him leave, and he's coming home, here! He isn't dead! He isn't dead at all!"

For the first moment, Peter Trefayre could only stare at her, while his thin face worked queerly. In the stableyard, the dogs had stopped baying. On the cot, the young German tossed a little, and his lips parted. *"Ja,"* he muttered, *"wenn 'mal Friede kommt—"*

My Most Amusing Experience

Anecdotes offered for publication in this department should not be longer than five hundred words and may be much shorter. For all anecdotes published by us we will pay from five to twenty-five dollars, according to our appraisal of their quality both in presentation and in story. Please address them to the My Most Amusing Experience Editor, Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. We cannot acknowledge or return unpublished contributions, but all will be carefully considered. All published material becomes the property of McCall Corporation.

Me and My Shadow

IT all started when a friend of our police reporter came in one night a few minutes before deadline and reported that he had been in the police station earlier in the night and, while waiting in an anteroom, had overheard a newspaperman talking with the chief of detectives about a kidnaping case. He said he believed the newspaperman was from an opposition paper in a near-by city.

At the time, kidnapers were making snatches right and left all over the country, and for several days the grapevine had had it that one of our own wealthier citizens had been receiving some threatening letters. Apparently we were being scooped, and we got to work at once on the tip.

However, we immediately ran into a stone wall. Police said they knew nothing about any kidnaping case, and so vigorous were they in their denials that any kidnaping had occurred, that I was confident that there was something to the tip and they were trying to keep the story quiet. So as soon as the paper had gone to press, I headed for the police station myself. There I tried every method of approach in an effort to worm something out of the officials. Failing, I spent the rest of the night riding around with a couple of radio patrolmen, hoping they might let something slip.

I kept at the story all the next day, but it was no use; not until late afternoon did the truth suddenly dawn on me. The night before, while out for a bite of supper, I had dropped in to chat with the chief of detectives, and while there we got to talking about a kidnaping case in a distant State which then was in the headlines. The newspaperman whom our reporter's friend had heard talking about a kidnaping had been I! For eighteen hours I had been chasing my own shadow.

M. W.

The Pheasant Feather

YOUR story of the "Changeling Grouse" in a recent issue reminded me of a time when one pheasant feather broke up the party—and an inspection party at that.

In a certain Midwestern State the State Police Districts hold monthly inspections of personnel, equipment, headquarters, etc. With the Governor's Trophy at stake, perfection is expected—sometimes almost achieved.

Came a day, then, in late fall when the inspection date fell during pheasant season. It was a beautiful day for it, clear and bright and a bit snappy during early morning. The men were slicked up, shined up—and lined up on the parade-ground. Down the line strutted the inspecting party.

And this was no ordinary inspecting party. Lured by the weather and our captain's promise of a good showing and snappy drilling, the Chief himself and party of politicos had driven out from GHQ at the near-by State capital—at State expense, no doubt.

The first squadron was inspected without incident—and without black marks! Two to go. The party paused before the leader of the second squadron, chosen because of his superior appearance and drilling ability.

Smartly Joe (not his name, of course) came to attention, heels clicking. His right hand slapped across to his holster at precisely the right angle—up came his revolver to "Salute," then to "Present for inspection"—up went his left hand as the cylinder swung out to eject the cartridges, then down to "Ready for inspection" with the six highly polished shells gleaming in the sun in his extended palm. All this done with eyes fixed dead ahead—no glancing at weapon, cartridges, or inspecting party.

It was a beautiful maneuver, beautifully executed. The lone false note detracting from the perfection of the presentation was a single pheasant feather protruding stiffly skyward from the muzzle of the gun.

The astonished inspector's hand halted in mid-air as he reached for the gun. Puzzled, Joe stole one glance up at his weapon—and a vivid scarlet flushed up from his collar to the roots of his hair. The stiffly held gun began to waver.

There was a strangled cough from the Chief, precipitating a gale of laughter which swept the party, commanding officers, and patrolmen—everyone except the embarrassed Joe. The balance of the inspection might have been described as "cursory."

P.S. You guessed it. That month we did *not* win the Governor's Trophy.

B. C.

Two Telegrams

THE first important assignment I received from my company was a trip to New York to sign a doubtful buyer. I was elated at this chance to show what a good business man I was, and it was a pretty important contract I was after.

After talking with the buyer a few days, going over points in the contract, I had a surprisingly easy time getting his John Hancock on the line. All I needed was the money to cover a business arrangement with a local agency to handle this deal.

I was quite excited when I went to the telegraph office to wire the office for the necessary cash, and to wire my wife the good news.

After a delay of a day and a half (I cussed my boss for holding me up unnecessarily), the money arrived. I made the necessary arrangements, and entrained for home.

After greeting my wife, she asserted she had certainly had a time getting that money. But since it was so important, it was all right.

"What money?" I exclaimed.

My wife handed me a telegram.

NEED ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS TO CLOSE JENKINS DEAL. VERY IMPORTANT.

It was clear now. In my haste I had wired my wife the message intended for the office.

"But how did you get the money? Our bank account is pretty low."

Then she explained how she had hocked the car for three hundred dollars, then mortgaged the house for seven hundred dollars—because she thought this meant a great deal to me!

Well, I couldn't laugh then! I hadn't even noticed who had sent the money. This joke was on me.

But the most amusing part occurred when I got down to the office. Everyone greeted me with twinkling eyes and loud laughs. Then I remembered—that other wire I had sent meant for my wife: it must have come to the office. What had it said?

I didn't have to remember. The boss handed it to me with a grin.

BIG DEAL A SUCCESS. SHOULD GET A RAISE FOR THIS. HOW'S OUR BABY? SEE YOU SOON, HONEY.

The boss was so amused that I got my raise, and of course got my car and house from the finance company.

Pfc. J. R. D.

The DEVIL'S COMMANDO

A short novel of an American outfit that fought on in the Philippines during 1944.

by William Chamberlain

ABOUT sundown Joshua Fort halted the column in the edge of the cogon grass while he sent Toomey ahead with Pedro and a couple of riflemen for a look-see. We hadn't run into any Japs lately, but it didn't pay to take chances. Dan Gilroy and I came up and squatted down beside Joshua Fort in the grass while we waited for Toomey to come back with his report.

I said, just to make talk, "If my dead reckoning is any good, San Isidro ought to be around here somewhere."

"Mile and a quarter up the trail," Joshua Fort said.

He knew the country like the palm of his hand, which was one of the reasons that the Japs had been chasing us for a year now without catching up. San Isidro was a little barrio maybe forty miles south of Dagupan in central Luzon. It squatted at the edge of the narrow Hernando valley which held the great canefields of the Hacienda Hernando.

Dan Gilroy chewed on a twig and grinned reflectively. He was a slender man with a close-trimmed black mustache and reckless eyes. Somehow Dan always gave you the impression of having just stepped out of a bandbox, which was amusing because he was as ragged and dirty as the rest of us—naked to the waist, except for a cartridge belt which was slung across his chest. He was black Irish and as unstable as a firecracker, but a good fighting-man.

"Ever been at Hacienda Hernando?" he asked.

"Never been," I said, not bothering to wait for Joshua to say anything. The Big Fellow never talked about where he had been and what he had seen.

"I was there once," Dan Gilroy said. "Back before the war. I was a shavetail up at Stotsenburg then and some of us were invited down to play polo at a big *fiesta*. It lasted four days."

"Quite a party?"

"Quite a party, pal. Quite a party! Song, wine *and* women!" Dan leaned back in the cogon grass and hooked one knee over the other. "There was one gal in particular—old Don Hernando's daughter. Her name was Marguerita."

"Nice, huh?"

"Yeah, nice. I always meant to go back but there was one thing and another, and I never got around to it. Then the damned Japs came."

I wasn't much interested—hadn't even been paying a great deal of attention. That's probably the reason I said carelessly: "Well, the Nip polo-players have probably been keeping her entertained—"

I stopped suddenly, wishing that I could keep my big mouth shut. Dan Gilroy's face got suddenly white underneath the tan, and he called me a name which I deserved.

"Get up on your feet!" he said through his teeth.

Then Joshua Fort reached out a big hand and clamped it down on Dan's shoulder.

"Forget it," he said. "Ed didn't mean it. Save it for the Japs, kid."

Dan sat back in the cogon grass again—we had a habit of doing what the Big Fellow said—but his eyes were black and sullen. I was glad enough when Toomey came padding back up the narrow carabao track from the direction of San Isidro. Toomey was a wizened little man with a squint and a perpetual grin. He never used three words where one would do.

"What did you find?" Joshua Fort asked him.

"Not much."

"Well, how much is not much?"

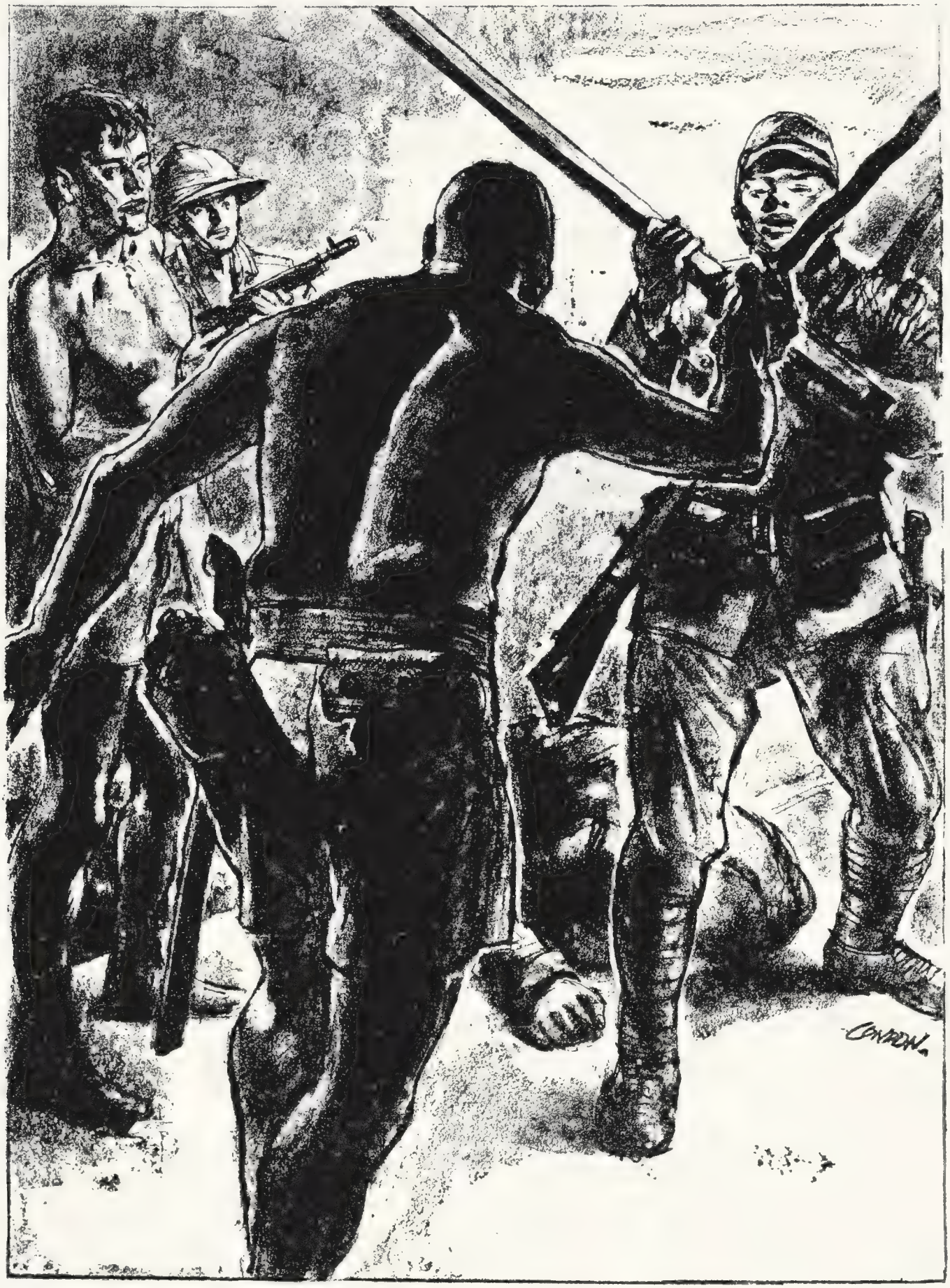
Toomey spat. "Everybody gone. Most houses burned. No sign of Japs. We caught a feller who says they're still in the valley, though. That's about all."

It was a long speech for Toomey. Pedro and the two riflemen came up then, bringing a Filipino civilian with them. He was a middle-aged man with a pockmarked face, and he acted dazed. Joshua Fort spoke to him in Tagalog, wheedling answers out of him patiently. After a while the man understood that we weren't going to hurt him, and he told us the story.

IT WASN'T NEW—WE'D HEARD THE SAME THING about plenty of other barrios. Just the details were different.

About three weeks ago the Japs had appointed a new *commandante* for the Hernando district. The old one hadn't been so bad; he had let the people alone as long as they turned out to work in the canefields and had paid their invasion taxes—but the new man was bad. His name was Major Takuna. He was a big man for a Jap; the Filipino civilian thought that he must be a half-breed of some kind because he didn't have bandy legs or gold teeth.

First he had raised the taxes. Then he had said that everybody would work in the canefields fourteen hours instead of twelve. It had been very hard, but the people of San Isidro hadn't protested. Finally, Major Takuna had started letting his soldiers come into the barrio at



Pedro paused to slash at the ropes which held the Big Fellow and Toomey, then swung on the big Jap soldier.

night—the old *commandante* had never done that. The soldiers took what they wanted, including the women.

About a week ago a Jap soldier had been found dead in the road which led down to Hacienda Hernando. His head had been chopped off with a bolo and he had been chopped up in other places, too. That morning a young fellow named Juan Hernando was missing from the barrio—and when the Jap constabulary came, they said that Juan was the one who must have done the killing. He had been married just two weeks, and a couple of nights before this Jap soldier, with three others, had taken Juan's wife away with them.

That afternoon Major Takuna had come with a platoon of soldiers. Some of the people had got away to the hills, but most of them hadn't. The Japs had tortured the mayor before they killed him and then they had shot a half dozen of the older men. They had herded everybody out and burned the barrio; afterward they had taken the men and the older women and the kids down to the big concentration-camp at the south end of the valley. The younger women and the girls were sent on to Manila, to work in the houses there.

As I said, it wasn't a new story. Joshua Fort grunted harshly and looked at me. "Put Major Takuna's name down in the little book, Ed," he said.

I put it down. We had a lot of names in the little book—and we had a lot of names that had a pencil line drawn through them, too. Joshua Fort talked with the Filipino civilian a little more.

Where did this Major Takuna have his headquarters, and how many troops did he have with him?

The Filipino didn't know. He thought that there were perhaps a thousand soldiers scattered up and down the valley. A lot of them were living in the plantation barracks at the hacienda. Major Takuna lived in Don Hernando's big house.

Did Don Hernando still live there, too?

Yes, the old Don still lived there—he and his daughter and the young Don. Also a man named Lanseer who seemed to be on good terms with the Japs. Lanseer was a tall thin man who coughed a lot. He was drunk most of the time, but when somebody would get sick in the barrio he would come and give them medicine. The Filipino didn't know where he had come from.

Joshua wanted to know if the old Don was friendly with the Japs.

He didn't know, the Filipino said—maybe; maybe not. Anyway the Japs had let him stay in the big house and hadn't hurt him.

It was getting close to dusk now, and thunderheads were piling up, down the valley. It would rain during the night.

Joshua nodded to himself, then turned to Toomey. "Any place left where we can camp, Toomey?"

"Yeah. The schoolhouse. It's made of stone—it didn't burn."

"Okay," Joshua said. "Get the men up, Ed. There's no use lying around in the rain all night when we can have a roof over our heads."

About twenty minutes later the cogon grass opened out and the carabao track dropped down the slope to cross a little creek on a wooden bridge. San Isidro barrio was on the other side. It wasn't as bad as Toomey had said—about half of the houses were still there, but they had a deserted look to them and the place had the same indefinable smell of all the other abandoned towns we had seen during the last year. Papaya trees grew among the houses and a few chickens scurried away as we marched in.

I sent a couple of patrols to search the houses on either side of the single street, while the rest of us went on down to the schoolhouse at the far end. It was a low stone building—probably had once been one of the convents which the friars had built back in the days of the Empire. A big mango tree grew in front of it.

Joshua Fort said, "Here's where we stop."

I didn't care much for the idea of bivouacking in San Isidro. Barrios are easy to ambush, and they attract Japs like flies. I growled a little about it to Joshua Fort, but he only laughed at me.

"Not getting spooky on me, are you, Ed?" he said.

I said I wasn't getting spooky, but I had lived this long and didn't particularly want to die right now. Joshua Fort thought that was funny, and since Toomey and Dan Gilroy sided with the Big Fellow, I let it go. Everything Joshua did was always all right with Toomey and I could see that the Hacienda Hernando was on Dan's mind. His eyes were still sullen and he stood around without much to say.

At that, I didn't feel too badly about it. There were thirty of us in the party, four white men and the rest Filipinos. All of us had fought at Bataan and most of us had spent some time or other in a Jap prison-camp, so we weren't exactly tyros when it came to taking care of ourselves. For another thing, we had spent the last year cruising around through the hills with Joshua Fort, and we hadn't been just looking at the scenery. The Manila radio had good enough reason to call us the Devil's Commando.

I said shortly, "Okay, Teniente, if that's the way you want it!" And I started away to see if Pedro had put the out-guards where they ought to be.

Joshua Fort could see that I was a little sore and he grinned at me slowly in that funny way he had and padded over to drop a big hand on my shoulder. There was a lot of man to Joshua Fort. He stood six feet four in his bare feet and the rest of him was built in the same proportions, including those same feet. Back on Bataan his Filipino Scouts had nicknamed him "Teniente Big Foot," but if they had just made it "Teniente Big" they would have been nearer the truth. He usually went around naked to the waist with a tommy-gun slung over each shoulder and that great red beard of his sweeping down across his chest. You could get mad at the Big Fellow, but you could never stay mad very long.

"Now, Ed," he said. "Now, Ed!"

"Skip it," I told him. "But if the good Major Takuna's little yellow monkeys catch you and hang you up by the heels, don't say I didn't warn you, Teniente!"

"Now, Ed," he said again, "you don't think the Major would do that, do you?"

"I'm going to make damned sure that he doesn't!" I said, and went off for a look at the out-guards, taking Pedro with me.

Chapter Two

EVERYTHING was all right. I had felt sure it would be, but in Luzon you just don't take such things for granted if you want to go on living. We were still fifty feet away when Corporal Vantos challenged us from Number One Post, which was a couple of hundred yards upstream from the barrio.

"Who goes?"

Pedro grunted an answer and then the two of us went on through the heavy cogon grass and squatted down beside the corporal. Pedro was a Moro—a scarred old reprobate with his teeth stained from betel nut and his brows puckered into a perpetual scowl. I hadn't any idea how old he was—maybe thirty, maybe sixty—but he was one of the best soldiers I have ever seen. He was first sergeant of the commando force, and he didn't let anybody forget it.

"Where've you got your men, son?" I asked Corporal Vantos, more as a matter of form than anything else. Van-

tos was a good soldier, too; he had been in my outfit back on Bataan.

"Auto-rifle, he there," he said, pointing with his thumb toward a twisted clump of cogon. "Tommy-gun over there. I here. Okay, you think?"

I grinned at him and said, "Okay. Maybe I'll make a soldier out of you yet, Vantos. See that you don't let one of those little yellow monkeys slip out of the jungle and cut your throat tonight."

He flashed his teeth at me and ran the ball of his thumb along the edge of his bolo. "No catch. Never fear."

Pedro growled something in dialect. I didn't know much Moro—not the brand that Pedro spoke, anyway—but I had picked up enough to gather that he was calling the corporal a misbegotten son of something or other and threatening to shave his ears off flush with his head if he so much as let a mouse get through his post tonight. Corporal Vantos didn't seem to mind. He grinned at me and stuck his thumb to his nose at Pedro's back.

Probably each of them had saved the other's life a half dozen times, all told.

We made a circle of the other posts; everything was all right. The last one was just over the crest of a little ridge which looked down into the Hernando valley, and after we had checked up on the men, Pedro and I climbed a little farther up the slope. There was an open spot there and we flattened out on our bellies to see what we could see.

Dusk was beginning to come down fast now under the trees, but in the valley there was still enough light to see. Great masses of thunderheads were piling up in the south. They made fantastic columns with their western edges flaming scarlet and gold as they caught the last of the sun.

I said, "Put those on canvas and you'd make a million dollars, Pedro."

The old reprobate just grunted. He was silent even for a Moro, and the only thing that a sunset meant to him was that it would soon be dark. Then he could sneak out with his snickersnee and decapitate a Jap or two. All of the rest of us in the commando carried bolos, but Pedro stuck to his own weapon. It was a wavy-edged kris about a yard long and it made the cold chills run down your spine just to look at the thing.

"You could buy yourself a dozen new wives and a big white horse to ride into Paradise on."

Pedro said that when he went to Paradise he would go riding a Jap. He had a sense of humor when he wanted to use it. I let it go at that and went back to studying the valley.

It stretched away for twenty miles and was checkerboarded with canefields. Before the war Hacienda Hernando had been one of the richest plantations in the Islands—and old Don Hernando one of the richest men. His house stood halfway down the valley, backed against the hills on the right-hand side. I got out the field-glasses which I had taken from a Jap captain killed at Sinsan, and focused them. They were excellent glasses; the houses down the valley seemed to leap up in front of my eyes.

The barracks and the other plantation buildings were off to the left about a quarter of a mile from the big house. I looked them over carefully and saw all I wanted to see. There were Japs there—plenty of Japs. They wandered about in their undershirts or talked in little groups. A bunch of them were playing baseball, and for some reason that made me mad as hell.

There was at least a company down there—probably more. I swung the glasses a little to take a look at the big house.

The old Don did himself well. The house sat up on a little hill and it looked like one of those Hollywood shacks with fifty rooms and a wide porch running all the way around it. There was a swimming-pool and a lot of lawn which looked well kept. The old Don wasn't really roughing it much; neither was Major Takuna.

Pedro was squirming around restlessly and I knew what he wanted. So I said, "Have a look," and passed the glasses over to him. He looked for a minute; then his lips crawled up across his stained teeth and he spat.

"*Aie!*" Plenty good hunting!"

I heard a twig snap behind us and I rolled over, reaching for the tommy-gun, but Dan Gilroy's voice stopped me. "It's all right. Take it easy."

He came on out onto the ridge and dropped down beside me. His usual air of sardonic good humor hadn't come back after the words we had had back there on the trail and I could see that the black dog was riding him. For a moment he lay there with his chin on his arms, looking down into the valley. I offered him the glasses but he shook his head.

I said finally: "Well, there's no use sitting up here all night. Let's get back down to the barrio. I'm ready to eat, myself."

Pedro took that as his permission to go, and slipped back through the bushes noiselessly. He could move more quietly through the jungle than any man I ever saw. I was about to push myself up when Dan turned his head to look at me. His eyes were sick.

"Stick around a minute, Ed. You mind?"

"No, I don't mind," I told him.

He didn't say anything more for a little bit, so I got the glasses and started looking at Don Hernando's big house again. The distance was rather far and it was beginning to get dark in the valley, so I couldn't be sure. But something moved on the wide veranda and it looked like a woman in a white dress. I was just as glad that Dan hadn't wanted the glasses.

Finally he said: "Ed, do you believe in hell?"

I tried to laugh it off. "I ought to. I was on Bataan and I spent three months in Donriquen before I managed to knock off a Jap guard and get away."

"I don't mean that. I mean the kind of hell the preachers talk about."

Well, I thought that one over. Two or three years earlier I would have made some smart crack about it, but I didn't now. I noticed that the thunderheads at the end of the valley were turning gray-black and the air had that thick heaviness which means a storm. Down below us the cicadas had started to sing.

"Maybe I do—maybe I don't," I said. "I don't know. Why?"

Dan spoke as though arguing with himself:

"I didn't use to but I do now. I was never much of a one to go to church; maybe that's where I made my mistake—because there's a hell all right."

I thought maybe I could snap him out of it, so I jeered: "The Reverend Gilroy will now preach a ten-minute sermon on hell; the Reverend is an expert on the subject."

Usually that would be enough to start Dan swinging at me, but this time he didn't pay any attention. That worried me even more.

"Ed," he said soberly, "the Irish have a gift for seeing beyond the curtain at times. I'm Irish and this is one of the times."

"What do you see?" I asked him.

I wasn't kidding, for I knew that what Dan said was true. I remembered Mike Shanley who had foreseen his own death back on Bataan; and then there was Reemy Coogan: When Reemy climbed into the cockpit of his patched-up P-40 he had told me that this was his last trip. Of course Reemy knew that eventually a last trip would have to come, but it was the Irish in him that told him this was the one. So now I asked Dan what he saw.

He rolled over on one elbow and chewed on a twig, taking his time to answer. "Fire," he said, after a little. "Fire all around—with the flames reaching out for me."

I had seen Dan in his black moods before, but not one as bad as this. I swung my fist lightly against his shoulder and tried to make my voice careless.

"Snap out of it, guy. That's an empty stomach talking, is all. Superiano's still got some of that Jap whisky left—a good slug of it under your belt and some chow, and you'll forget all about it. Let's go down."

He shook his head. "Stick around a little longer, will you, Ed? I want to talk a little more."

"Go ahead."

"Look," he said, "my old man lives in Cleveland—in Chesterbrook Place. He's a swell old guy. If you ever get out, Ed, look him up for me, will you?"

"Sure," I said, "except you can probably just as well look him up yourself."

"No. This is my last raid, Ed."

I said angrily: "The hell with that sort of nonsense! You stand the same chance that the rest of us do! Now, for God's sake, snap out of it!"

Dan just looked at me and I knew that there wasn't any use arguing.

"That's why I want to tell you about this, Ed," he said. "It won't take long—and maybe then I'll feel better about it. It was back in the fall of '41. I was a second lieutenant then. I had plenty of money and there was all the whisky in the world to be drunk up, and women were exciting game. I was having a hot polo season so I was asked down there,"—he jerked his chin a little toward the valley,—"to play in the matches at the old Don's annual *fiesta*."

I didn't say anything. There wasn't anything to say. Behind us I could hear the faint sounds of the men making camp down in the barrio.

"I had a lot of fun," Dan said. "Polo in the morning and the afternoon. Good, hard polo that brought the lather out on you. The old Don had some of the best ponies I ever saw. Cold beer between chukkers and then a shower and whites and tall drinks on the veranda before dinner. Afterward music and girls and more drinks—and Marguerita."

Dan had a way of talking that could make you see things. All of a sudden I was remembering summers *I* used to spend before the war. I realized, a little surprised, that I had almost forgotten there were such things as casual talk on cool verandas in the late afternoon, or cool drinks in tall glasses, and girls in crisp frocks.

All that had been smudged out by the smoke of a thousand cooking-fires and by the rains and suns of a hundred marches, obscured by the cold, empty feeling which grips the pit of your stomach while you listen for the sound of the Jap patrol before dawn, and lost in the sober preoccupation which grows like a protective shell around those who hunt and are hunted.

DAN'S VOICE JARRED ME BACK to the present. I swore sourly as I blinked and saw that the darkening valley was still there in front and that the thunderheads were spreading swiftly across the sky.

"She was the prettiest thing I'd ever seen," Dan was saying. "Medium tall and perfectly formed. She had black hair which she wore low on her neck with a big white flower tucked in the side. I saw a lot of her the first three days. The old Don had American ideas and he didn't try to keep her shut up behind bars. Marguerita had American ideas, too."

Dan stopped. I wanted to get it over with. I said:

"So on the third night the two of you walked down by the swimming-pool. There was the moonlight and the music and you were a little drunk. So it happened."

Dan twisted around and his face was white and strained in the dusk as he glared at me.

"You crummy so-and-so! That's twice today that you've opened your mouth out of turn! Once more and I'll fix it so that it won't open so easy!"

I mumbled, "Hell, I'm sorry! But it's happened to plenty of other people. What *did* happen?"

"Nothing," Dan said harshly. "I was crazy about her. I tried to make love to her, but she wouldn't let me. She said we hadn't known each other long enough, and we'd have to be engaged first. Then, the night before I was due to leave, this Otto Lanseer showed up. Later on I found him kissing Marguerita out in one of the little summer houses. She had never even let *me* hold her hand."

"Maybe he was a relative."

"He wasn't," Dan said between his teeth. "He was the son of the old Don's partner in Manila. I found that out later. Well, I lost my head and made a scene. I said a lot of things. I called Marguerita a little tramp, I remember. When Lanseer tried to interfere, I pitched him down the steps."

"You must have been drunk."

"I'd had a drink or too, but I wasn't drunk—crazy with jealousy, was all. The worst of it was the way Marguerita took it. She just stood there looking at me, with her face still and her eyes contemptuous.

"'I think you'd better go, Lieutenant,' she said.

"Then the old Don showed up, and he was even worse. I went and packed my bag and there was a station-wagon waiting to take me back to Stotsenburg. The old Don was standing beside the door.

"'I trust you have enjoyed your visit, señor,' he said, and his voice was like an icicle. He didn't say, 'Come again.'

"I mumbled something, I remember,—'You've been very kind' or 'Thank you so much' or some other damned drivel,—and climbed into the station-wagon like a pup with his tail between his legs."

HE STOPPED FOR A MINUTE and made himself a cigarette out of brown papers and coarse Philippine tobacco. He shielded the match carefully with his body and then the end of the cigarette glowed red. Ordinarily I would have stopped him, but we were pretty well hidden on the ridge and we didn't have to be so careful about lights any more. I figured he needed the smoke more than we needed the security, at the moment.

"I wrote a half-dozen times but my letters always came back unopened. Then we went on maneuvers. After that the Japs bombed Clark Field all to hell and we went north to Lingayan. You know what happened after that."

"Yeah," I said. "That's been better than two years ago. I should think you'd have got over it by now."

"Maybe I would have if it wasn't for what happened during the retreat down to Bataan. We were fighting a rear-guard action and we came into Hernando valley over on the other side and a little farther down. It was just about this time of night. We were all in—had to stop for a couple of hours. I was sure that everybody had pulled out for Manila, but I went over to the hacienda just to see. I'd seen enough of the Japs by that time to know that it wasn't healthy for anyone, particularly women, to keep within reach."

I said "Amen" to that. I still get a cold sweat when I think of some of the things that I saw on our way back down Luzon from Lingayan Bay.

"Well," Dan went on in that flat voice, "they hadn't gone. The old Don was there and Marguerita—and Otto Lanseer. They were sitting inside with the lights on when I rode up. I didn't bother to knock but just went in.

"'For God's sake,' I said, 'what are you doing here? Don't you know the Japs are coming?'

"The old Don said yes, they knew the Japs were coming and this Otto Lanseer said 'What of it?' in a nasty voice. He was about half drunk. Marguerita sat at one side and didn't say anything, but just looked at me. I

wasn't much to look at, I guess. I had been riding for close to sixty hours and fighting for a good part of that time. The dust was an inch thick on me except where the sweat had washed it away and what uniform I had left was in rags. I didn't like what Otto Lanseer said, and I was too tired to be polite.

"'If you don't care about your own filthy hide, you ought to have some thought about Marguerita,' I told him.

"He grinned at me like a cat, propping his eyelids open with his fingers. The old Don just sat there staring ahead of him as though he hadn't heard anything. His mouth was open a little and there was a vacant look about his face which I would have wondered about if I hadn't been so tired.

"Lanseer said, 'The Japanese are friends of mine, Lieutenant. They will not harm my wife. Now—get out before I shoot you for the dog that you are!"

I said under my breath, "So that's it, is it?" And Dan nodded soberly, scrubbing his cigarette out against the ground.

"That was it. For two or three minutes I stood there looking at them. Then I turned around and walked out. Marguerita reached me before I had gone down the steps. She had her arms around my neck and was kissing me, but I was too tired and felt too rotten to care.

"'Dan,' she said, 'I had to do it to save Father. Don't you see? He is not well and they have some hold over him—something terrible. Don't you see?'

"Well, another time I might have understood, but I didn't then. The things that I had seen on the way down from Lingayan were too fresh in me. My mind was all tangled up with those pictures: Men lying along the road with their bowels spilled out—my men. Little brown kids who had been bayoneted. Women—oh, God! And she was tangled up with people who did that!

"She was married to that man in there—that German who had helped plot all this out! She shared his bed with him! She had sold her fresh young beauty—"

Dan's voice trailed away, and I didn't say anything. There wasn't anything to say. I listened to the cicadas and kept my mind on the simple things which were immediately around me. War can do things to a man's mind if he thinks too much. You've got to fight wars in the present; you don't dare go back too much into the past or too far forward into the future.

Dan went on talking again.

"Well, I couldn't take it. I pulled her arms away from my neck and was sick there on the steps. As soon as I could straighten up, I went back down to the scout-car and rode back to the troop. Afterward—I don't know how long afterward—we went on down into Bataan. The fighting there helped. It took my mind off things."

IT WAS GOING TO RAIN VERY SOON NOW, I thought. We ought to be getting back down to the ruined barrio. I wanted a drink of that Jap whisky which Superiano carried in his stores—a big drink. As a general thing I didn't bother easily, but Dan's story had somehow got me.

I said, talking rough, "Forget it, guy. The Big Fellow would say that the spooks have got to you. Anybody would have done the same thing you did. There wasn't anything else to do."

Dan turned and looked at me. It was good and dark now, but I was close enough to him so that I could see the drawn lines in his face. He shook his head.

"Yes, there was something else I could have done. I could have taken her with me."

"It doesn't make sense," I complained. "You've just been telling me—"

Dan said slowly: "There was a guy named Finny that I ran into on Bataan two weeks before the surrender. Before the invasion he used to work for the old Don. He told me the things I didn't know."

"Such as—"

"The old Don is crazy—I ought to have guessed that from the way he looked that night. The Lanseers were German agents working with the Japs. They wanted Hacienda Hernando for purposes of their own and they blackmailed the old Don into urging Marguerita to marry the younger one. Then they blackmailed Marguerita into consenting. There are gaps in the picture that I don't know, but that's the meat of it."

"I still don't see—"

Dan interrupted me, and there was a grating note in his voice. "She wanted me to take her away that night. She had learned what they were up to. And I threw her down—left her there, for the Japs!"

I sat wondering what I ought to say. Then I said: "Don't take it so hard, kid. Likely everything will come out all right!" And I knew I was a damned liar. So did Dan.

"The Big Fellow didn't come down here to the Hernando valley for nothing," Dan went on. "Probably he knows what goes on at the hacienda and plans to take a hand in it. I'm going to get mine on this trip, and I'd like to think that you'll be looking out for Marguerita, Ed. That's the reason I've been telling you this."

"Sure, Dan," I told him. "I'll do that. Sure."

He got up and slung his tommy-gun over his shoulder, and the two of us started down toward the barrio. I was thinking that I could use a shot of that whisky more than ever.

I had forgotten about the sentry post which was fifty yards down the ridge, and one of my Filipinos almost put a bullet through me before I could convince him I wasn't a Jap.

CHAPTER THREE

THE Big Fellow and Toomey were sitting on the stone porch of the schoolhouse when Dan and I came up the street. They had glasses of whisky and water in their hands. A kerosene lantern stood on a box off to one side, and its smoky light flickered a little in the wind which was beginning to come up. The cogon grass rustled beyond the burned houses. We didn't have to worry about being seen. The Japs had found out that it wasn't healthy to go prowling around at night unless they went in force and our out-guards would give us warning of that.

Dan and I sat down on the porch and Superiano, who acted as our messboy when he wasn't killing Japs, brought us a drink. He had his small cooking-fire going close to the far end of the building and I could smell the odor of chicken stewing. It smelled fine.

I lifted my glass and nodded to the others. "Mud in your eye," I said. Dan didn't say anything.

The drink was lukewarm but it had a pleasant jolt when it hit your stomach and it didn't taste too bad. We had taken the whisky away from a Jap convoy which we had bushwhacked on the Donriquen road a fortnight before. Toomey had set up the portable radio and tuned it in on Manila. It was grinding out tinny dance music which came from the Manila Hotel.

Joshua Fort put down his glass and jerked his head toward the ridge. "Everything quiet?"

"Yeah," I said.

"See any Japs in the valley?"

"Plenty at the hacienda—a company or more. They were playing baseball."

Joshua grinned and stroked his beard. "Let 'em play. They'll keep out of trouble that way."

I finished my drink, wondered if I'd have another and decided I didn't want it. Jap whisky is like charity—a little of it goes a long ways. Dan called Superiano over

and had him refill his glass, I noticed. Dan usually didn't do that.

I said casually to Joshua, "You figuring to look in on the boys down at the hacienda?"

"No, let 'em play baseball. There's a Dagupan convoy due at the south end of the valley day after tomorrow. We'll cut the bridge at San Felipe and gather it in."

I thought of the latest entry in the little black book. "How about this Major Takuna who burned San Isidro?"

The Big Fellow leaned his shoulders against the wall and didn't say anything while he stroked his beard. I had been campaigning with him for a year now and knew him better than most of the others, being sort of second in command, but I could never figure out what he was thinking. He would have made a grand poker-player because he took care of a wounded man or killed a Jap with the same placid expression on his face.

Finally he said, "We will try him after supper. Then we will decide."

THAT WAS A LITTLE CUSTOM WE HAD. When a man's name went down in the little black book he was usually as good as dead. But the Big Fellow insisted that he have a trial. We were executioners, not murderers, he said. Usually after we had caught someone whose name was listed there wasn't time for a formal trial—or he might be killed resisting arrest, for example. To get around that we tried him *in absentia*. Joshua Fort acted as prosecutor, defense counsel and judge. If sentence of execution was passed, he said a few words over the prospective body.

It sounds screwy but we got a certain amount of satisfaction out of it. It was funny how the grapevine carried the word around, too. One Jap *commandante* up in northern Luzon killed himself when he learned that Joshua had passed the death-sentence on him, and a fat Portuguese collaborator in Manila fled the Islands.

As I have said, there were a lot of angles to Joshua that we didn't understand. What we did understand was that he was as tough and crafty a fighting-man as any of us had ever seen. Since he had been leading the Devil's Commando, the Japs were having bad dreams of nights all through central Luzon.

Toomey said, "Let's eat."

Superiano brought messkits filled with the chicken and rice, and it was as good as it had smelled. After I had finished I made a cigarette and stretched out on my back on the stone flags of the porch. The radio was putting out "My Blue Heaven" and I wondered where they had dug up that ancient relic. It sounded good, though, and I let my mind slip back to the things it reminded me of.

I was in high school, then, in San Antonio, Texas. One night a bunch of us went out on a picnic. We took along a phonograph and a bunch of records, and sat around under the trees listening to them and talking, and looking at the stars. That was the first time I ever heard "My Blue Heaven." I thought it was swell.

The first drops of the rain hit the dust out in the street with fat, muffled whacks. There was a grass thatch over the flagged porch where we were, so we didn't have to go inside. Joshua Fort got up and stretched; then he went on off down the street to check up on the men and see that they had been fed and were well bedded down.

Dan Gilroy got up suddenly and kicked his messkit across the porch. It skidded into Toomey, who was sitting by the lantern, and Toomey looked at it for a minute. Then he picked it up and tossed it to Superiano.

"What's eating you?" Toomey asked.

Dan stomped across the porch, with his hands in the pockets of his ragged canvas trousers, and looked out into the rain. It was coming down harder now.

He said finally, "I'm sick of this! What does it get us? We knock off a convoy today and two more come by tomorrow. What in hell does it add up to?"

"Fun," Toomey said.

Dan swung around on him. He started swearing, but just then the sky opened up and the rain hit the thatch hard and drowned out his words. Joshua Fort came back out of the darkness with his beard dripping and the water running down his bare shoulders. Somehow the Big Fellow could always calm us down when we got to jawing among ourselves. He looked at Dan and dropped an arm around his shoulders.

"Now, Dan," he said.

For a minute Dan stood scowling. Then he shrugged. "Okay. Let's forget it," he said.

He went off into the shadows and, after a little, I heard him picking at Superiano's guitar and humming under his breath. I hoped to God that he wasn't going to start singing that song because the thing always gave me the creeps—but I knew well enough he was. He always sang it when the black mood was on him.

It was a song born out on the Old North Line back during the days of the Insurrection, so I've been told. Some forgotten soldier, carrying a Krag and wearing a muddy blue shirt, probably made it up. An unutterable sadness runs through the melody—a lonesomeness which made me hate the song now. Maybe because it's a song of forgotten men and that touched close to home.

The song begins:

Master Sergeant William Brown
Said to his captain bold,
"There's more men lie on yonder hill
Than you have been told."

Oh, there's many's the man's been murdered in Luzon,
And in Samar and Mindanao,
Oh, there's many's the man's been murdered in the Philippines,
And lies sleeping in some lonesome grave.

A hell of a song! Sure enough, Dan was singing it now with his voice murmuring faintly above the hammer of the rain. I looked over at Toomey, hoping maybe he'd help me shut Dan up. Toomey was asleep. The Big Fellow was no help either; he was sitting there with his back against the wall and gazing off into the darkness, preoccupied with thoughts of his own.

I GOT UP AND TOOK THE RADIO inside the schoolhouse with me. I flashed my light around and saw that the place was just as the Japs had left it—desks turned over, books scattered on the floor, blackboards pulled down and broken up. Some kid had left a doll in one corner. It wasn't much of a doll, but as I looked at it I felt that cold, helpless anger run over me again. I snapped the light out and thought of that Jap convoy we were waiting for and hoped that some of the rats who had torn up the schoolroom would be with it.

I tuned out the bangy music and turned to the Manila station which featured Don Annunzio's broadcast of news and comments. He was on the air most of the time and he never put out anything but lies. We liked to listen to him, though, because we happened to be one of his particular hates. I thought I would see if we had been wiped out again and what the present quotation was on our heads.

I cut in right in the middle of the news. The Don had a high-pitched, singsong voice and it was a pretty good bet that his real name was Takahasha or Yamamoto or Yasahara.

The news was the usual propaganda: The Jap navy had won a great victory off the Marshalls. New Guinea had been reoccupied. General Stilwell's army had been destroyed in Burma.

It was all old stuff and didn't bother me any. We had our own short-wave receiver back at our base in the hills, and we knew well enough what the true situation was. The Don finished up with his customary drivel about how happy everybody was under the Far Eastern Co-

Prosperity Sphere and how lucky the Philippines were to be allowed to participate.

Toomey came in then with the lantern and sat down on one of the desks. "His form aint so good tonight," Toomey said reflectively. "Maybe the little rat is sick, I hope." Don Annunzio was about the only one who could inspire Toomey into putting more than three words together at the same time.

I was about to say something, when Don Annunzio started in again.

"Attention!" he said. "I have the important announcement. It has just been disclosed that Major Takuna and his brave troops have surrounded the Teniente Big Foot and his gang of unspeakable cutthroats somewhere in the Hernando valley. Shortly they will all be completely liquidated."

Toomey said, "My God, again?" and reached out to shut the radio off. "That's what I like about the Don—I can shut him up whenever I want to."

GOING BACK TO THE PORCH, I TOLD Joshua Fort what I had heard. It didn't worry me a great deal, and it didn't worry him at all. The Japs here in the valley were garrison troops, afraid to move about at night much, and compared to ourselves, they were babes in the woods when it came to moving and fighting in the jungle. We had been surrounded a couple of times before and had gone right through them, leaving a few calling-cards behind in the shape of Japs with their throats cut.

"You think it's the truth?" I asked him.

"Most likely. This new *commandante* seems to be a vigorous bird. We'll drop in on him before we leave."

"Any special instructions for tomorrow?"

"Nope. We'll move out at four. Let Dan take the point."

"Okay," I said.

The rain had slackened off to a drizzle and I could see that the clouds were breaking away a little overhead. The night was steamy hot and the bugs had come back with the lessening of the rain. Inside the schoolhouse they made a shifting mantle around the lantern. Then Dan Gilroy's shoulders blocked out the light.

"Teniente," he said, his voice a little unnatural, "now would be a good time to go down and burn out that rats' nest at the hacienda, wouldn't it?"

"Maybe," Joshua said mildly. "Why?"

"If Takuna and his Japs are up here looking for us, then they won't be down there."

"Look, son," Joshua told him in his placid voice, "haven't you sort of got things mixed up? It's Japs we're hunting—not haciendas."

"Maybe I'm mixed up and maybe I'm not," Dan said shortly. "That's a rotten, stinking hole down there and long overdue for the burning. If you don't want to burn it let me take a couple of men and I'll do the job myself."

The Big Fellow shook his head. "First things first. We've got the convoy to take care of."

"To hell with the convoy!"

"Son, that convoy is carrying supplies and ammunition to the Japs who are fighting our lads up north. Burning the hacienda isn't going to help them; knocking off the convoy is."

Dan said through tight lips: "Will you give me permission to take a couple of men and go down there?"

"No," Joshua Fort told him. "You know the rules we go by, Dan. We beat the Jap and we go on living because we follow those rules. We stick together and that gives us strength and oneness. We subordinate ourselves to the common good; we place first things first. Those are the rules; they are more than rules, Dan—they are our Ten Commandments and we live or die according to how we observe them."

Dan stared at us for a moment. Then he swung on his heel and disappeared into the rain without any reply.

Joshua Fort smoked thoughtfully, his elbows hooked over his knees and one hand clasped about the charred bowl of his pipe. His eyes were somber.

"When we get back to the hills I must give Dan a rest," he said. "His nerves are fraying out, and a man becomes dangerous—to himself and others—when that happens."

"It's not nerves," I said, and then told him most of what Dan had told me earlier up there on the ridge. I found that the Big Fellow knew most of it already and was not surprised. There weren't many things that he didn't know.

"Otto Lanseer is the German High Commissioner," he said. "He's a drunkard and a bungler and worth more to us dead than alive. The Japs hate him. They'll kill him presently, blaming it on us, and save us the trouble. Old Don Hernando is harmlessly crazy. He doesn't know what's going on and we've got no quarrel with him."

"How about the girl?"

Joshua Fort was quiet for a few minutes. Then he sighed a little. "What Dan heard is true—she's blameless. You and I know that, but others don't. It's best to leave her where she is—she's in no danger as long as Lanseer is alive."

"Dan's eating his heart out about her, Teniente," I said. "What would be the harm in sending a patrol to bring her away? It hadn't ought to be too hard a job."

"What would you have me do with her then?"

"Take her back to the hills with us."

The Big Fellow didn't say anything. He just looked at me and went on smoking his pipe. It wasn't until then that I realized how impossible was the thing that I had suggested. Dan, the Big Fellow, and I, might know that she was all right, but we were only parts of the whole machine. To hundreds of others she would be Marguerita Lanseer, wife of the German High Commissioner and a woman who had been on the side of our enemies for the last two years. It wouldn't work.

We were a few against many and the lives of all of us depended on maintaining the integrity of the organization which had laboriously been built up ever since the days of Bataan. Its strength lay in mutual trust; once that trust was destroyed, nothing remained.

I said soberly, "It's a hard thing."

Joshua reached over and put a big hand on my knee. Usually the Big Fellow's face showed nothing, but now there was harsh pain in his eyes. He echoed my words.

"Yes, it's a hard thing. I loved her long before Dan ever did, Ed—probably loved her better than Dan did."

I sat there with my mouth open, thinking that one over. Then I remembered how little any of us knew of the Big Fellow's past—he had never seen fit to speak about it. There was no reason why what he had told me shouldn't be true.

I looked at my watch. It was nine-thirty, so I got up, got my tommy-gun and went on down the trail to have a look at the guards. I didn't see Dan anywhere around.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVERYTHING was quiet. I had taken Pedro with me and I told him what we had heard over the radio. He merely grunted. The contempt which Pedro held for all Japs was too great to be put into words, but his grunt expressed it eloquently.

We had done the posts in the reverse order from that we had followed earlier in the evening, and came to Number One last. Corporal Vantos was on the job. Pedro stopped with him for a little while to keep him company and talk about tomorrow's operation. We had been squatted down in the wet cogon grass for about five minutes when Pedro hissed a warning and reached for the kris at his side.

"Somebody come," he whispered.

I strained my eyes and ears and got nothing for it. The carabao track stretched ahead of us for a hundred yards —a faint thread against the blackness. The wind rustled the cogon grass faintly. There was nothing else that I could make out. Then the auto-rifleman, hidden a little farther down the trail, challenged.

"Who goes?"

Pedro said, "Wait!"—and then he was slipping through the grass parallel to the trail. I started to follow but Corporal Vantos put a hand on my arm and I sank back again. I couldn't move at night like Pedro could, and I would only give his position away.

THEN OUT OF THE DARKNESS AHEAD a voice said hysterically in Spanish, "Don't shoot! For God's sake, don't shoot!" The entreaty was repeated again in English.

None of us said anything. Then I heard a lizard chirrup down the trail and I knew that Pedro was behind whoever it was out there and that it was all right to advance them now. I swung the tommy-gun around and told them to come on. Presently a tall slim figure took shape a dozen yards away.

"Halt there," I said. "Who are you?"

"I am looking for Joshua Fort. He's up here somewhere. I'm looking for him!"

It was a man's voice, high-pitched and with an accent to it when the fellow spoke English. I called out to Pedro in Tagalog, asking if this fellow was alone and Pedro said that he was, but that he would watch the trail for any more.

So I said, "I'm not interested in who you're looking for, fellow. I'm interested in who you are. Get to talking."

"I'm Manuel Hernando," he told me. "For God's sake, don't waste time. Take me to Joshua Fort."

I turned that over in my mind. I wasn't in any hurry. The new Jap *commandante* was a resourceful man from all reports and this might be one of his little tricks. I remembered that the pockmarked Filipino had said that the old Don's son was living at the hacienda and so I guessed that this was the bird. Still that didn't add up to any good reason why he should be wandering around at night hollering for Joshua Fort. I was just wondering if I shouldn't put a bullet into him to save trouble later on, when the Big Fellow's voice came out of the dark:

"What's the trouble, Ed?"

It wasn't loud but the stranger standing in the trail heard it and started forward excitedly. "Señor Joshua!"

I swung the tommy-gun onto him and said, "Just a second, bud," but the Big Fellow stopped me.

"Let him come, Ed. I know him."

I stepped back into the grass a little and let this Manuel go by. It was too dark to see anything much but I guessed that he was little more than a kid. Then I told Corporal Vantos that the Japs were probably out on the prowl tonight, picked up Pedro and followed Joshua back to the barrio. It was beginning to rain hard again.

We went inside the schoolhouse, put some blankets over the windows and lighted the lantern again. If this Takuna really was trying to pick us up there was no use making a good target for his merry little men to snipe at out of the darkness. When I had got through doing that I took a look at Manuel Hernando.

He was about seventeen, I guessed. Not a bad-looking kid, but too thin. He had been dressed in a white suit but it was in rags now and splashed with mud to the collar. Looking at him, I guessed he was in the first stages of collapse. Joshua Fort evidently thought so too.

He said, "Tell Superiano to bring the whisky." Then he kicked a bench against the wall and got the kid onto it, propped in a corner so that he wouldn't fall off. Superiano brought the bottle and Joshua measured out a stiff dose and held it under the kid's nose.

"Here, get this down."

Manuel swallowed it, gagged and spit most of it up again. I didn't blame him. It was pretty bad whisky. The Big Fellow tried again and it stayed down this time. Some color began to come into the kid's face; after a little he was able to sit up by himself. I looked at Joshua, but if this meeting meant anything to him you would never guess it from his face.

He said after a little: "What did you come for, Manuel? Your people are my people no longer."

"Marguerita sent me," the kid told him.

"Why did she send you?"

"To warn you—and because they would have killed me tonight."

"The Japs?"

"Yes. And Otto. I don't think that he wanted me to be killed, but I was a part of the price that Major Takuna demanded for sparing Otto's life."

"And the rest of the price?"

"Father and Marguerita. She wasn't to be killed—just given to Major Takuna—and after that to the soldiers."

"You were a brave boy to run away."

There was nothing at all in Joshua Fort's voice, but his words cut worse than a whip.

"She said that I must," the kid said, and I could see that he was fighting hard to keep from crying. "She said that it didn't matter what happened to us—that we were all useless and of no importance. But she said that you must know about the trap, so that you could avoid it and go on fighting. That's why she said I must come."

Joshua Fort swung his big head around suddenly and a quick aliveness had come into his face. He shot questions at the kid, most of them in Spanish. I followed well enough to piece most of the story together.

This new *commandante*, Takuna, had brains as well as viciousness. He had boasted when he took over the District that he was going to bag Joshua Fort and the commando—and I had to admit that he had been doing all right so far. Maybe things had become too easy during the past months and we had become careless. Anyway, Takuna had laid a very pretty trap, and if it hadn't been for Manuel and his sister, we might have walked right into it.

There wasn't any convoy going through San Felipe day after tomorrow. However, there would be some empty trucks with soldiers in them, to say nothing of scout-cars ambushed along the road. The convoy had been part of the bait to draw us down into the Hernando valley. The burning of San Isidro had been more bait.

Takuna could guess that we would listen in on the radio broadcasts—and Don Annunzio's little story was a phony like all the rest. The Major had figured that Joshua might do just what Dan Gilroy had wanted him to do—make a try for the hacienda while the garrison was supposed to be away. It wasn't away, but was disposed neatly to gather us in when we arrived.

The latter part of the plan had been messed up by a captain who had failed to keep his troops out of sight this afternoon. They were the ones I had seen from the hill. The captain was now hanging up by his thumbs in one of the cellars of the hacienda.

Major Takuna had been furious about that slip. He was a heavy drinker and had been drunk at dinner. For some reason he had blamed Otto Lanseer because things had gone wrong.

FOR A MINUTE THE KID STOPPED TALKING and Joshua looked at me and jerked his head toward the whisky-bottle. I poured out another slug of the stuff and young Manuel managed to get it down. After the first one or two it wasn't so bad, anyway.

Joshua asked, "Takuna threatened Otto?"

The kid said yes. The German was drunk too, and at first he had tried to bluster his way out of the argument. Among other things he had threatened Major Takuna

with the displeasure of the German Government. Takuna had laughed at that and said that Germany was just another one of those decadent nations which Japan would take over just as soon as she got around to it.

That sobered Lanseer a little. It sobered him a hell of a lot more when Takuna told him that his usefulness to Japan had ended, and that he intended to have him shot the next day.

"So he bargained?" Joshua asked.

The kid nodded his head dumbly and his eyes weren't pleasant to look at as he got back to his feet. He swayed there for a moment and then managed to square his shoulders while he looked at Joshua.

"Now I go back," he said. "Do not forget the word that my sister has sent you. Avoid the Hacienda Hernando as if it were poison. It is as full of traps as a pond is full of frogs. Marguerita says that you must go back to the north—because if you are caught and destroyed everything in Luzon is lost."

JOSHUA FORT WAS SITTING THERE with his elbows on his knees while he looked at the boy. Somehow he reminded me of a great cat, relaxed, yet ready to spring. The yellow of the lamplight matched the amber of his eyes.

"Did she send me any other message, Manuel?"

The kid met the Big Fellow's gaze. I remembered what Dan had told me about Marguerita. "She's a thoroughbred," he had said. Sitting there in San Isidro's wrecked schoolhouse I could believe Dan, because young Manuel was a thoroughbred, too.

"None."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, Señor Joshua, I am sure." He hesitated for a moment. "She would have sent her love had she not feared that you might misunderstand."

"Misunderstand how?"

"Think that you must try to help her, señor. That you must not do."

The Big Fellow sat there thinking for a long minute. His face had dropped back into its inscrutable lines and there was no telling which way his thoughts were going. Toomey came in quietly from the darkness and stood a little to one side without having anything to say. It was raining hard again.

Finally Joshua jerked his shoulders impatiently. "There's a thing or two that I want to know about, Manuel. You will tell me, please. Has Major Takuna got any Jap patrols out looking for us, do you think?"

"Yes, señor. He has them all up and down the valley."

"Are there any near here?"

"I think so but I do not know for sure. They have been instructed not to bother you, for fear you may run away. They are just to watch and report."

Joshua grinned a little at that—a hard grin. Major Takuna wouldn't have felt happy to see that grin.

"Now, how did you know that you would find me here at San Isidro barrio?"

Manuel Hernando smiled a little in the smoky lanternlight. It wasn't much of a smile but it took a little of the premature oldness out of his face.

"Marguerita was sure that you would be here. She said that the Old Gentleman always stopped at San Isidro when he came into the valley and that you would stop, too."

I couldn't figure that one out, but it seemed to make sense to Joshua and I let it go. After all it wasn't any of my business. I had heard the Big Fellow speak of the Old Gentleman a time or two in the past but when I asked him who he was talking about, he just smiled it off. Said it was a man he had once known—a man who was dead now.

Joshua got up and walked over to where the kid was standing by the door. He dropped a big arm across the kid's shoulders and his voice was gentle now.

"Forget what I said a little while ago about a brave thing to do. You've saved us from a nasty mess, but you can't go back just yet. You must stay with us for a little while."

The kid had guts. He straightened up and looked at Joshua with a sort of imperious dignity. All of a sudden I remembered the story that Dan had told me and I guessed that the old Don must have looked at him the same way when he was escorting him off the Hacienda Hernando.

"Señor," he said, "you must have misunderstood. I go back to join my father and sister. Tonight!"

"No," Joshua told him. The Big Fellow stepped through the doorway and out onto the porch, motioning me to follow him. He said back over his shoulder to Toomey: "See that he gets something to eat—and doesn't take off for the hacienda."

As I went out the door, the kid had crumpled down on the bench with his face in his hands. I could see that he was crying and I thought that these Dons were a hell of a funny breed, all in all: made of steel but without toughness, so they shattered against a stronger blade.

Joshua told me to find Dan and bring him back to the schoolhouse. Also to have Pedro wake the men and get them ready to march. I thought sourly that that would be just swell. I couldn't think of a finer night to march in—the rain was hammering so hard on the thatch that Joshua had to yell at me to make himself heard. He guessed what I was thinking, because he grinned and spat.

"You're another, Ed," he said. "Only a bigger one."

"Another what?"

"Son of whatever it was that you were thinking I was. I've got my reasons for playing it this way. You'll have to take them on trust for the time being."

"Okay," I said, and I meant it. After all, the Big Fellow had never done us wrong in the year he had been leading us around the hills. I looked at my watch just before I stepped off the porch into the rain. It was a quarter after ten.

CHAPTER FIVE

I FOUND Pedro squatting in a half-ruined nipa shack whetting the edge of his kris by the light of a candle which was stuck on the inside of a tin can. The kris already had an edge better than any razor, but it was Pedro's idea of a pleasant way to spend the evening. I watched the light dance up and down the wavy blade and decided that I wouldn't care to have Pedro out hunting me with that thing on a dark night.

I squatted down beside him and watched for a minute. He had a beautiful technique of stroking the blade with the stone. There was something almost symphonic in the *"whik-whee"* which it made. I said something to that effect but the old reprobate just gave me a dirty look and grunted.

"Everybody tucked in their little beddy-byes?" I asked.

Everybody was, he said.

"Good. You can just go around and rout everybody out again then. The Teniente says we march tonight."

If I had thought to get a growl out of him I was disappointed. He showed his stained teeth in a wide grin, placed the stone carefully in its waterproof pouch and then slipped the wicked-looking kris into the wooden scabbard.

"Fight, maybe?"

"That's a hell of a bit of understatement," I told him. "Fight *certainly* would be more like it."

"Aie," he said with a gleam in his eye and I knew that he was thinking of those Japs we had watched by the barracks this afternoon. "Maybe good hunting."

I told him briefly of what young Don Manuel had told the Big Fellow. Pedro listened closely. Then he nodded.

"Good! Good!"

"There's little enough good in it that I can see," I said to him sourly. "Have you ever heard of the one that the Teniente calls the Old Gentleman?"

He sat there in the flickering candlelight looking at me. I could see that he was making up his mind as to whether he would tell me a whole lie, just a part of a lie —or maybe the truth. I think he decided on the latter, with reservations.

"Little bit, maybe," he said.

"Well, who was he?"

Pedro grunted and said what amounted to "a good guy" in Moro. He always dropped into his own language when he wanted to be vague without hurting my feelings.

I said angrily: "That's a hell of an answer! Don't be so close-mouthed. I found out about the facts of life quite a while ago."

That seemed to tickle the old devil, because he grinned at me like a cat and scratched his armpit. "Good guy, that one," he said. "He was the Teniente's father."

HAVING BROKEN THE ICE, HE TALKED. Part of it was in English, part in Tagalog, part in some Moro dialect. I managed to get the general drift of what he was saying.

The Old Gentleman's name had been Saul Fort, but he had never been called anything but the Old Gentleman, as far as Pedro knew. He didn't know how he had got the name. Fort was an itinerant preacher-doctor who had wandered through the Luzon hills for thirty years scaring hell out of the Filipinos with his Bible-thumpings, taking care of them when they were sick, dancing at their weddings and drinking at their feasts, marrying them and burying them, rejoicing with them and sorrowing with them. A great guy.

A huge man, Pedro said, with a great booming voice and an eye for a pretty woman. He carried a scourge for the wicked and the patient tenderness of a woman for those sick or in pain. The Filipinos had worshiped him, and with good cause.

I wanted to know more about him but didn't dare take more time. That was too bad because I knew that, in all probability, the next time I asked Pedro about him the old rascal would look me in the eye, grunt and disclaim any knowledge of such a person.

"Where is he now?" I asked, getting up to my feet.

"The Old Gentleman has ridden the white horse into Paradise," Pedro told me shortly. He stopped for a minute, then added a half dozen more sentences while he stroked the hilt of the kris with caressing fingers.

I understood better when he had finished. The Japs had taken the Old Gentleman at Tarlac, as he stood in the door of a convent school barring their entrance. They had tied him to a post and killed him with their bayonets. Pedro spat the last words out.

"This has sent many slaves to serve him in Paradise," Pedro said, his face inscrutable while he continued to stroke the hilt of the kris. "They are yellow, slant-eyed slaves and not worth very much. Therefore he must have many of them."

That's a poor translation—it sounded much better in the Moro dialect that Pedro used—but I got the point. I was out in the rain again before I remembered that I had not asked him if he knew where Dan was.

I went on down the street, stopping to inquire at every house where any of the men were billeted. It was in the next to the last one that I got an answer to my question. I didn't like it. A little after nine Dan had taken Corporal Marcello and Private Singan with him and had gone off in the direction of Number Five Post. He hadn't said where he was going.

Number Five Post was the one on the ridge and I went up there, slipping and stumbling on the greasy slope. Corporal Delgano halted me in the dark. Yes, he said, Dan and the two soldiers had come through there. They had stopped for a minute to talk and then had gone on down into the valley. They had been carrying their field equipment with them. That was all right, was it not?

I said, yes, it was all right—and I wished to God that I wasn't lying. Then I told Delgano to see that his other two men were awake because we were going to march tonight and would be calling them in pretty soon.

"Ah," Corporal Delgano said,—and I could feel him beaming at me in the darkness,—"we march against the Jap, no?"

"We march against the Jap, yes," I told him.

My thoughts weren't pretty as I slipped and floundered back down the hill. Dan had disobeyed the Big Fellow's direct order and had gone on down to the hacienda. I knew enough of Joshua Fort to understand that Dan had done the one thing unforgivable to any commander operating in the face of the enemy! I called Dan every black name that I could lay my tongue to, as I stumbled along toward the schoolhouse in San Isidro.

I was almost there when I heard a shot. It was a long way off and muffled by the rain but it was unmistakably a shot. I stopped for a minute, waiting. Fifteen or twenty more shots followed in swift succession. I thought I heard a yell, but I couldn't be sure. After that there wasn't anything more to hear except the heavy beat of the rain on the cogon grass.

Joshua Fort was standing outside the schoolhouse as I came up. I knew that he had heard the shots, too. I clumped on up, oozing water, and stood there without saying anything. Joshua was the first one to speak.

"That was Dan?"

I said, "Yeah. He took Corporal Marcello and Private Singan with him. They've been gone for a couple of hours."

I heard Joshua sigh a little as though tired. Then he said, "Come on in, Ed. There's a few things to be done before we march out."

We went back into the schoolroom where the lantern was. The kid was still sitting on the bench with his arms across his knees and staring vacantly in front of him. Toomey sidled up to me and asked out of the side of his mouth where Dan was. I told him.

"Jesus!" Toomey said in a shocked voice.

JOSHUA FORT HAD DRAWN A LITTLE SKETCH on a piece of paper and he called Toomey and me to come and look at it. It was an outline of the valley with crosses to mark San Isidro and the hacienda. A route between the two had been drawn in.

"We'll cross the valley here," Joshua said, putting a finger down, "and work along the east side. About a mile and a half above the hacienda we'll take to the hills and come out here. After that we'll see what happens. We ought to get away from here by midnight and, with luck, be in position about four."

I thought that that was being optimistic, remembering the trouble I had had getting up to Post Number Five. I didn't say anything, though. After all, what was going to happen was going to happen. Joshua went on:

"Ed, you take the point with two men. Toomey the right flank and Pedro the left, with two men each. Usual marching formation. I'll keep the rest together with me. No fighting tonight if we can help it! Got any questions?"

Toomey grunted and rubbed his bald head. "Yeah. What are we tryin' to do except march from here to there?"

The Big Fellow stood there, rocking back and forth a little on the balls of his feet. Raindrops still clung to the muscles of his shoulders as the lantern-light slid across them. He was a hell of a good-looking man, I thought abstractedly.

"We're going down to get Dan, Toomey," he said. "There's some other little chores that we'll take care of at the same time."

"Good idea," Toomey grunted.

The Big Fellow went on, "This new *commandante* is smart, so we're going to have to have a showdown with him sooner or later. Now's as good a time as any. It's either that or head back to the hills and stay there."

THE BIG FELLOW WAS RIGHT and we knew it. There was something that had been bothering me, though, and I put it into words.

"Teniente, the Japs faked the convoy and they faked the radio broadcast. How do you know that the story the kid told you isn't just another fake?"

Joshua looked across the room to where young Hernando was still sitting on the bench. "Ed, it's this way," he said, "The Old Gentleman once nursed Manuel through typhoid fever—saved his life when nobody else could do it. That's how I know."

Ordinarily it wouldn't have made sense, but I remembered what Pedro had told me, and it made sense now. I said, "Okay. Whatever you say."

Superiano came in carrying a basin full of hot water, a razor and a towel. Toomey and I stood around goggle-eyed as Joshua sat down on a stool and Superiano fastened the towel around his neck.

"God almighty, Teniente," Toomey said in a shocked voice. "You aint going to have 'em cut off, are you?"

The Big Fellow grinned a little wryly and said that he was. There was going to be a good bit of prowling around to do down at the hacienda and with that beard he would be about as inconspicuous as a Fourth of July set-piece. He said, "Check the men. Then assemble them here in fifteen minutes. We've got one little chore left to take care of before we march."

I knew what he meant—Takuna's trial. A little chunk of ice hit my stomach as I wondered whether or not Dan's name had gone down into the little black book.

Out in the street there wasn't much for Toomey and me to do. The men were all ready—anxious to be moving. Rain and bad weather didn't mean a thing to them. I found Pedro and told him that he would take the left flank party. He didn't ask anything about Dan and I was glad of that because I didn't want to talk about it.

It was just short of midnight when we assembled the men and marched them up the street to the schoolhouse. I went in first and saw Joshua standing by the lantern while he thumbed soberly through the little black book. The change in him was startling. Somehow I had always thought of him as being older than the rest of us—middle-aged, probably. Without his beard I could see that he was about my own age, twenty-eight.

He said: "Bring the men in, Ed."

They filed in and ranged themselves along the wall, shuffling their feet a little uneasily. They were all watching Joshua. I wondered how they would take his changed appearance. Men who live twenty-four hours a day with danger get funny superstitions and the red beard had been a sort of talisman to them. I glanced at Pedro and thought that he looked worried.

Joshua Fort placed the lantern off to one side and then motioned Toomey and me up. We were standing sideways to the men against the wall and facing the empty front of the schoolroom where the blackboards had been torn down. The Big Fellow placed the open black book on the desk in front of him, and laid a small dog-eared Bible beside it.

"Major Takuna," Joshua said, as though the man stood in front of him, "it is my duty to inform you that you are now on trial for your life."

Maybe it sounds silly to tell, but it wasn't silly to see and hear there in that ruined schoolroom with the lantern flickering on the box and the rain hammering suddenly outside. Joshua Fort's voice was slow and sonorous. I looked at the soldiers out of the corner of my eye. They weren't looking at Joshua; they were staring at the front of the room—seeing the man who wasn't there.

"Does anyone speak for this man?" Joshua Fort turned his head and looked at me, then at Toomey and each one of the soldiers who stood against the wall. Nobody said anything. "No one speaks," Joshua said. "Since no one speaks for him I will speak against him.

"I charge that he is a murderer of old men and small babies. He is a despoiler of women. He has burned the homes of innocent people who have done him no harm. He has sold the old and the very young into slavery. Therefore, he must die. Does anyone protest that sentence? If they do, let them speak."

No one had anything to say. I could see the light glistening on the sweat on Toomey's bald head. Joshua looked at the little black book again and I felt sick.

"Otto Lanseer, it is my duty to inform you that you are on trial for your life. Does anyone speak for this man?"

I had thought that it was going to be Dan Gilroy and my relief was so great that I didn't even hear the charge and the death sentence. Then Joshua closed the little black book and laid it back on the desk. I knew that Dan's name had not been entered. Over across the way the soldiers stirred and I knew that they had been thinking the same things that I had.

Joshua picked up the dog-eared Bible and opened it. His voice was deeper as he read:

> "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 'They shall die of grievous death; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth; and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.' "

I shivered a little and could feel the sweat running down my own face. For a moment Joshua stood there with the smoky light dancing across his naked shoulders. Then he put the Book down and picked up the two tommy-guns which leaned against the desk.

"Time to march," he said shortly.

It unfroze us. Pedro grunted a command in Tagalog and the men filed out, forming up in the street. Ten minutes later we cleared the barrio and took the trail which led on down into Hernando valley.

CHAPTER SIX

I HAD Corporal Vantos and a pint-sized private named Helio Ascension with me in the point. We were about a hundred yards in front of the rest and it was our job to keep the main column out of trouble. It kept on raining hard.

The carabao track ran into a muddy road after a little bit, and the cogon grass dropped behind. There were cultivated fields on either side, with the cane about two feet high. It was blacker than the inside of a tomcat but our eyes got used to the dark after a while and we could see a little.

We had been marching for about an hour and a half when Corporal Vantos grunted warningly.

"Something ahead, I think," he whispered to me.

We stopped and listened. At first I couldn't hear anything except the beat of the water on the cane. Then I heard a man groan and mumble something I couldn't make out. The sound came from the road up ahead. I whistled a bird-call to stop the column behind us and then Vantos and I went forward, leaving Ascension to cover us from the rear.

I heard the groan again and it was closer this time. Corporal Vantos said: "I very scare'. I think that are Private Singan."

It was. He was lying in the mud in the middle of the road. I got down on my knees and took a chance with my flashlight—snapped it out again quickly. I had seen enough. Singan had been shot twice, bayoneted a half-dozen times.

He said weakly, *"Es Teniente?"*

"Rest easy," I told him. "The Teniente will be here in a minute. Then we'll fix you up okay, son."

THAT WAS A LIE, FOR SINGAN WAS PAST fixing up. Corporal Vantos called softly from the other side of the road and I went over there. Corporal Marcello was lying in the ditch, dead. He'd been given the same treatment the bastards had given to poor Singan.

Feet padded in softly out of the darkness and Joshua Fort and Pedro arrived. I took them over to where Singan was lying, flashed my light across him for a second and then snapped it out again. I could hear Pedro growling low in his throat.

The Big Fellow said gently, "What happened, son?"

I got the little medicine-kit open on my knee and fumbled with the syringe. There wasn't anything that we could do for Private Singan now except to make his passing easier. He was whispering with a hoarse, bubbling sound.

"Teniente, the Japs catch us. We are sorry. You please will not be angry?"

"No," the Big Fellow said, "I won't be angry. Can you tell me what happened, son?"

The little Filipino was going fast but he was game. A Jap patrol of ten men had jumped them from behind. It had been well planned and there hadn't been any shooting—at first. The Japs hadn't hurt Dan except to beat him up. After they had grown tired of that they had stripped him, tied his hands behind him and taken him off to the hacienda. It seems they hadn't wanted the two Filipinos.

"It's okay, son," Joshua said. "Everything's going to be all right." He got back to his feet and motioned to me with his head. I had the needle ready but it wasn't necessary. Little Singan died before I had a chance to use it.

We laid the two of them in the edge of the cane and covered their faces to keep the rain off. There wasn't anything else that we could do for them except to say a few words. So we stood there with the water running down our faces—not all of it rain—while Joshua Fort said:

"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord." He stopped for a moment and then added: "And we'll take a price for your killing, Corporal Marcello and Private Singan. Amen."

That was a promise that the Big Fellow was making there in the rain and I knew that we would not leave Hernando valley until it had been carried out.

He said to me, "Likely there will be more patrols, Ed. Keep your eyes open."

"I'm likely to," I told him.

He and Pedro went on back to the main column and, after a few minutes, we started on again. Bitter anger gnawed at me as I kept picking my feet up and putting them down in the mud. I wished to God that I could stop thinking. Dan Gilroy had killed those two men back there. He had killed them with his disobedience just as surely as if he had pointed a gun at their heads and pulled the trigger. It was a hard thing to think about, because Dan had been a friend of mine.

Behind me I could hear Private Ascension sniffling, and I damned his eyes and told him to stop.

Twenty minutes later we came to the stream which I had been looking for and turned left along it to cross the valley. It had good cover, so we closed the column up to make better time. Even so it was slow going and a faint gray was beginning to show in the east as we crossed the Manila road and struck rising ground again. We left the stream and climbed to the crest of a low ridge where Joshua halted the column. It was still too dark to see anything, but we should be close to the hacienda now.

Joshua passed the word along for the men to rest; then he came up to where I was, bringing Toomey and Pedro with him. The rain had stopped. I wanted a cigarette bad but didn't dare take a chance—I was too wet to get one made and lighted anyway. The Big Fellow squatted down beside me.

"Your men all right?" he asked.

I said, "Sure, they're all right. What do we do now?"

"Wait until it gets a little lighter—then go in. We're probably outnumbered ten to one, so we've got to make it sudden and fast. Toomey, you'll take twenty men and hit the barracks. Set them on fire first and then get the Japs as they come out."

"That'll be fun," Toomey said.

"The rest of us will take care of the big house."

I didn't know how tired I was until we stopped moving. A person doesn't know how good rest can be, until he has made a night jungle march through the rain.

The Big Fellow was describing the layout down there to us and I wondered at the minute detail which he seemed to know. Then I remembered that he had somehow been acquainted with the hacienda in the old days, and let it go at that.

"Manuel says that the Jap soldiers are all quartered in the old plantation barracks," the Big Fellow said. "They're about four hundred yards south of the big house and there are four of them built in a square around a court. They're made of wood and thatched and, if you can get them started, they'll burn like a Roman candle."

"We'll get 'em started," Toomey said in a flat voice. I knew he was thinking of the two men we had left back in the edge of the cane.

"All hell will break loose as soon as we start," Joshua said thoughtfully, "and there's no telling how many floating patrols this Takuna has got out. If we're lucky we'll catch most of his men asleep. If we're not, we're likely to get our fingers burned. Don't try to hang on too long. As soon as you see that they're getting organized, you pull out, understand?"

"Uh-huh."

"Go north until you hit the stream again and then follow it back into the hills for about half a mile. There's an old stone quarry there and we'll rendezvous at that."

"I got it," Toomey said. "That all, Teniente?"

"That's all," the Big Fellow said thoughtfully. "Good luck—and take care of yourself, Toomey."

The little man nodded and slipped back to get hold of his noncoms and give them their instructions. Joshua sat there quietly for a moment with his back against a tree while he rubbed at his shaven chin with his fingers. It was beginning to get light fast in the east now.

FOR SOME REASON I HAD A SUDDEN premonition that this was all wrong and that the coming day held disaster for us. Looking at Joshua I wished that he hadn't shaved his beard; then called myself a damned old woman and tried to think of something else. Down below a rooster crowed with an arrogant, strident voice and the sound made me a little homesick. I swore again at myself, chewed on a sticky piece of Jap candy that I had been carrying in my pocket and then started in to work on my tommy-gun, checking it over carefully with my fingers.

Joshua said, "Ed, the rest of us will take the big house. Your job is to get hold of Dan—if he's still alive. And get the girl. Don't pay any attention to anything else

that happens. As soon as you get them, clear out and head for the quarry. Keep Corporal Vantos and Ascension with you." He stopped for a moment and then added grimly: "Likely you'll have to carry Dan."

"How about the others?" I asked.

"Pedro and I'll look after them. Manuel thinks there are not more than five Japs sleeping in the house. With any luck we'll get them before they know what's up."

"You're going to burn the house, too?"

"I'm going to burn it," he told me grimly.

I slipped down to where Corporal Vantos and Ascension were on guard and told them to eat—then be ready to move out with Joshua Fort and me. When we got inside the house they would follow me without regard to whatever else might be happening. Corporal Vantos was disappointed that we weren't going with the party that was to burn the barracks, but he was a good soldier and didn't say anything. After I was sure that they understood their instructions I went on back and stretched out beside the Teniente again. I wanted all the rest that I could get.

LYING THERE, I KNEW SOMETHING was bothering the Big Fellow. He was different than he had been before—I couldn't just put my finger on what it was but something was there. Somehow I knew Pedro sensed it, too. I wished I could ask him about it but I knew the old man would tell me nothing. He was sitting a half-dozen feet away and he was whetting his kris again.

Joshua Fort said suddenly, "Ed, I'm turning the commando over to you after this raid."

That was the last thing in the world that I expected the Big Fellow to say.

"For God's sake, why?" I asked.

He didn't answer me for a time and when he did start to speak his voice sounded tired and old.

"Ed," Joshua said, "do you know anything about the man they used to call the Old Gentleman?"

"Yes."

"What do you know?"

"That he was your father and a good man. The Japs killed him at Tarlac."

Joshua nodded. "Those are the essentials of it, Ed. I loved the Old Gentleman more than most people could understand. My mother died when I was twelve and it was then that he started taking me with him on his goings and comings up and down Luzon. He was mother, father, teacher, preacher and friend to me—all I had, in fact. He was the only person I had ever loved until we stopped down there at the hacienda one night six years ago."

I fished another piece of the sticky candy out of my pocket and put it in my mouth. I didn't like the stuff, but my mouth was dry and it helped to moisten it.

"We never needed much money," Joshua Fort went on, half as though he was talking to himself. "When we did we'd stop for a week or two and do whatever work there was at hand. When we came to the hacienda that time the old Don had some colts to be broken. I was good with horses, so we stayed for a while and I took the colts in hand. Marguerita liked to ride with me when I was exercising them, and I got to know her that way."

"She must have been just a kid," I said for no particular reason. I wanted Joshua to go on talking; when I was listening to him I didn't have time to think.

"Seventeen," he told me thoughtfully. "I didn't have any right to fall in love with her, but I did. I didn't say anything but she knew and told me so the night before the Old Gentleman and I were due to leave. She told me that she felt the same. There wasn't anything we could do about it then."

There were faint streaks of pink in the east now, but the heavy blackness still clung to the floor of the valley below. After last night's rain there should be a ground fog this morning. I was glad of that because it would give us cover. I guessed that we should be moving out in another fifteen minutes.

"The Old Gentleman and I were away up in the Bontocs for six months," Joshua went on. "We took another three months coming down Luzon. The Old Gentleman was never one to hurry and it was nearly a year before we stopped again for the night in the valley. We stayed at San Isidro barrio and that evening I went on over to the hacienda. Marguerita met me at the door and, as soon as we saw each other, we knew what the answer had to be. I was scared, but I went to see the old Don and asked him for permission to marry his daughter."

Joshua laughed a little under his breath and it wasn't a pleasant laugh to hear.

"So he threw you out?" I said.

The Big Fellow didn't pay any attention to the question. "He was sitting in his library with one of his wolfhounds stretched out on the floor beside him. He listened to what I had to say. After I had finished he got up from his chair and the blood started to swell up his face.

" 'Señor,' he said, 'do you think that I would allow my daughter—the daughter of Don Hernando y Cortez—to marry the son of a cheap mountebank? A tramp who goes begging among the natives because he is too lazy to work? A mumbling fool who pretends to be a minister of God but who is nothing but—"

Joshua Fort stopped for a moment and then went on, his voice flat and emotionless. "He was twice my age, but I hit him in the mouth hard and he went backward, hitting his head on the table as he fell. I left him there on the floor and went on back to San Isidro without seeing Marguerita again. The next morning the constabulary came. They arrested me for assault with intent to kill—which was all right with me. Also they arrested the Old Gentleman for vagrancy. God damn it, Ed, for *vagrancy!* They had me handcuffed, but I jumped the two constables and they had to beat me unconscious before they took me in. Resisting arrest was added to the charges against me."

I MUMBLED SOMETHING about these old families being nice people to know, remembering Dan's experience with the Hernando tribe. Joshua wasn't listening. He went on:

"The old Don was rich and influential, so they gave me ten years in Bilibid Prison for striking him and beating up the constables. The Old Gentleman was sentenced to six months at hard labor in the local jail. I was still in Bilibid when the war came. After it became apparent that the Japs were going to take the city, things were very confused, and I managed to escape. I went north to try and find the Old Gentleman again."

"I found him—but I had got there too late. He was still hanging to the post where the Japs had left him. I cut him down and took him back into the hills and buried him. After that I think I went completely mad for a little while. When I finally came to my senses, I had only one thought in my mind and that was to find the man who had been responsible for the Old Gentleman's torture and to kill him with my bare hands!"

I shivered a little, sitting there in the dull half-light of the coming day, and it wasn't because it was cold, either.

I said under my breath: "You found out?"

He didn't answer at once; then said: "I went into Bataan. I used to go over behind the Jap lines a lot at night. Pedro would go with me. We would ambush Jap officers and when we had caught one we would ask him questions. They all talked, but none of them knew the answer that I was looking for."

I was suddenly conscious again of the *"whik-whee"* of the stone against the kris. My imagination was able to

fill in the details of those raids behind the Jap lines on Bataan.

"Last night I found the answer," Joshua Fort said soberly. "It was so simple—yet Manuel had to bring it to me: Otto Lanseer. He knew the influence that the Old Gentleman had with the Filipinos. There could be no collaboration until he was put out of the way."

I felt sick at my stomach. The things the Japs do are bad enough when performed by Japs—it was ten times worse to think of a white man doing them.

Joshua said then: "Last night Dan Gilroy broke the code. He deliberately disobeyed orders and started for the hacienda. You know the reason why."

I said yes, I knew.

"Because he disobeyed orders Corporal Marcello and little Singan died tonight. Not only that but, by his actions, Dan endangered the safety of all of the rest of us. Yet, in spite of all that, I did not enter his name in the black book. Do you know why I didn't do that, Ed?"

"No," I said, "and I don't want to know. Probably if I'd been in Dan's place I'd have done the same thing."

The Big Fellow turned to look at me for a moment. Then he shook his head and I saw his face harden. Down below us the rooster crowed again. The buildings were beginning to take vague shape out of the darkness.

"You've got to know, Ed. I didn't put Dan's name down because I knew then that I was going to do the same thing that he had done. Only I was not going to risk the lives of just two men. I was going to risk all of your lives to satisfy my personal vengeance. Now do you understand?"

"I understand," I said, "but I don't give a damn. We're going to kill Japs, aren't we? What's the difference between bushwhacking a convoy and going down there and burning the hacienda?"

He jerked his shoulders and got up. Toomey whistled and then I heard the soft rustle of the brush as he came up to where we were. The outlines of the buildings were getting plainer now. I saw the sprawling house below us, a half-mile away. Farther on were the barracks and outbuildings. No lights showed, but I caught the faint smell of smoke in the air and guessed that the cooks were up. It was not quite four-thirty.

Before Toomey came up, Joshua said, "You know now why you're taking over the commando, Ed. Take this, too."

I saw that he was holding the little black book out to me. I didn't want it, but against my will I took it. The Big Fellow turned away to speak softly to Pedro and, still against my will, I opened the book to its latest entry.

Written neatly there was the name "Joshua Fort."

Chapter Seven

TOOMEY'S assault party filed off in the shadows to the left and we gave them a fifteen-minute start because of the distance they had to go. Finally the Big Fellow said, "Let's go," and we started on down the slope.

His voice was calm, placid—the same as usual—and that surprised me. There was no trace of the strain that had been in it as he talked to me during that long half hour while we waited for the light to get stronger. I could see his big shoulders swinging ahead and the sight drove the depression out of me. I thought: "A man thinks funny things at four o'clock in the morning. Tomorrow everything will be okay."

We halted for a moment at the edge of the brush to reconnoiter. As I had expected there was a heavy ground haze, and through it the trees and bushes of the lawn were dim and ghostly. The house stood a couple of hundred yards away—a big, sprawling structure with a columned porch. To our left a hedge started and ran diagonally across the lawn to within a short distance of a side entrance.

"Made to order," I thought. I was tense but not scared. If things went well we would be inside, finished with our work and out again before much of an alarm had been raised. Then I thought of Dan and a cold hand bunched up the inside of my stomach at what I might find.

JOSHUA FORT WAS ON ONE KNEE, watching and listening to see whether or not there was a sentry. There was and we saw him presently—a short, wraithlike figure which passed around the corner of the house and disappeared from view.

Pedro grunted and said softly, "I take him."

Joshua nodded. "Presently. We'll move up along the hedge first so we can give you a hand if you need it."

"No need," Pedro said sourly, but he waited for us.

The hedge was shoulder-high and we went along it, stooping a little. There would probably be dogs, but we had to risk that. We couldn't hope to remain undetected for more than a few minutes, anyway, and must count on surprise and speed to do the rest. I slung my tommy-gun so that I would be free to use both hands on my bolo if I needed to.

The sentry was not in sight as we came opposite the house, so we crouched there and waited for him to come back. I strained my ears but could hear nothing. Then that damned rooster crowed again and I almost jumped out of my shoes. I heard the Big Fellow chuckle softly beside me.

"Getting spooky, Ed?" he whispered. He was a hard man to fathom.

Soft footsteps disturbed the gravel at the far corner of the house, and through the hedge I saw the sentry coming slowly along the path. He was a pudgy man with spectacles and he was carrying his rifle sloppily across his shoulder. He passed so close to where we were that I could have reached out and touched him with the point of my bolo.

Pedro slipped noiselessly through the hedge and took two catlike steps after him. Then I heard the kris whine a little song ending in a faint crescendo, and the sentry slumped forward without a sound. The Big Fellow caught him before he hit the gravel and the two of us dragged him through the hedge and out of sight. He didn't have a head any more.

We waited a few minutes to see if there was another sentry, but none came. Then the Big Fellow looked around, jerked his thumb toward the porch and we went swiftly across the path. I had been waiting to hear Toomey's crowd open up, but everything was still quiet.

French doors opened out onto the side of the porch where we were and I thrust the point of my bolo between them and pried them open. They didn't make much noise. I heard Corporal Vantos whisper a quick warning, and I whirled around just in time to see a slim figure come running across the gravel and up the steps. Pedro slid back and started to swing the kris but Joshua got a hand on the Moro's wrist just in time. It was young Manuel.

"I thought I told you to stay up in the woods," Joshua whispered harshly.

The kid was half crying. "I must take care of Marguerita," he said. "Please."

Joshua Fort swore under his breath—then he shrugged his shoulders. We didn't have time to stand there talking about the weather. "Well, since you're here, go with Ed and show him where the rooms are. Ascension, you stay here by the door. Don't let anybody through."

Little Ascension grinned. He might be pint-sized, but he could handle a bolo. "I watch."

We went in. It was the library, I saw. There was a fireplace and leather chairs and a lot of books and a big desk. I thought sardonically that it ought to have pleasant memories for the Big Fellow. A door led to the right and we went through that and were in a big room with a carved staircase leading upward. There was just enough light to see by, and the windows were still dark gray. The house had a musty, ancient smell which was unpleasant after the freshness of the outside morning.

Somewhere in the back of the house I could hear pots and pans being rattled, and I wondered why I didn't hear Toomey's crowd open up. The Big Fellow and Pedro were already halfway up the stairs and I motioned to the kid and Corporal Vantos, and started up too. At the top, I got the kid by the arm.

"Which way's your sister's room?"

He took me down to the left with Corporal Vantos bringing up the rear. The floors were covered with carpets an inch thick and we didn't have to worry about making any noise. There was a big door at the end of the corridor and smaller doors on either side of it. Young Manuel knocked softly at the nearest one.

A woman's voice said at once: "Who is it?"

The kid talked to her in Spanish, his words tumbling over each other in rapid succession. She answered him and now her voice had a different timbre to it. I heard a bolt slide back and a lock turn; then the door opened.

I was in a hell of a hurry, but I had time enough to see that Marguerita Hernando was all that Dan had said she was. She was fully dressed and she had an old-fashioned pistol in her hand which she had forgotten to put down. There was a chair opposite the door and the bed hadn't been slept in, so I guessed she had been sitting there all night waiting for someone to come. It was apparent that she hadn't been expecting her brother and the rest of us, though, from the way the two grabbed each other.

I broke it up. "Look, sis, do you know where they've got Dan Gilroy locked up?" I asked.

She swung around toward me and I got my first good look at her face. She was very pale and pain was a heavy shadow across her eyes.

"In the cellar, señor—I will show you. But we must hurry."

"You're not telling *me*," I said.

Then I heard the sound my ears had been waiting for and in spite of the need for haste I jumped for the window. A rattle of tommy-gun fire tore the quiet morning open. It was punctuated by the heavier thump-thump-thump of a Browning auto-rifle. The window opened to the south and what I saw cheered me up a lot.

A GREAT CLOUD OF SMOKE WAS LIFTING above the square of barracks a quarter of a mile away and already its bottom edge was tinged with orange flame. Toomey and his boys had done a good job. In spite of the rain the night before, they had succeeded in building themselves a nice bonfire. I could see little men running out into the open and then tumbling as Toomey's bullets hit them. Twenty men with automatic weapons can be pretty deadly, especially when the other guy is still half asleep and confused.

I swung back to the others. "Let's go," I said.

From the far end of the house a man cried out shrilly and then his voice died away as though somebody had snipped it off with a pair of shears. The words he had yelled were Japanese and I could guess pretty accurately what had happened to him. Pedro hadn't done all that whetting for nothing.

We went back into the corridor and had started toward the stairs when I happened to remember something. I swung back to the girl who was following me, her brother's arm around her waist. Corporal Vantos was bringing up the rear.

"Where's the old Don and Lanseer?" I asked. "Don't they sleep in this wing too?"

The girl said slowly: "My father died last night."

"Murdered?"

She shook her head. "No. He died naturally. I am not sorry—it is best."

"How about Lanseer?"

"He is gone with Major Takuna."

I swore at that. We had made a special trip to see those two birds, and they both had flown. There was a hell of a rumpus going on in the other wing, though, and so I guessed that the Big Fellow and Pedro were finding that their visit hadn't been a complete waste of time.

We went on down the stairs and turned toward the back of the house. Suddenly a Jap with an apron around his middle jumped into the hallway and came running toward us. Corporal Vantos beat me to it and shot him over my shoulder. I told Vantos that I would kill my own Japs—and to be more careful where I was, when he was shooting! I might as well have saved my breath.

Stairs led down. Then I thought of what we might find at the bottom so I asked young Manuel if he didn't know the way. He said yes and so I told Corporal Vantos to take the girl and go back to the library and wait. Ascension was there and the two of them ought to be able to take care of her all right.

IT WAS IN A WINE-CELLAR THAT they had Dan. The door was locked, but I held my .45 to the lock and blew it apart. There was a candle in a miner's candlestick hanging on a nail, and I lighted it and kicked open the door.

"Dan!" I said.

He answered me in a voice thick and muffled; then I held the candle up over my head and saw him. He was almost naked and hanging by his wrists from a beam with his toes just touching the floor. He had been beaten until his face was almost unrecognizable, and the sight of his body made me sick. A Jap officer was hanging beside him and I guessed he was the one who had not kept his troops out of sight.

I stuck the candlestick into the door jamb; then Manuel and I got Dan cut down and out into the corridor. He couldn't stand, and I told Manuel to get some brandy and get it in a hell of a hurry. Everything seemed to be quiet upstairs and I didn't know whether that was good or bad.

Dan looked at me through eyes which were swollen almost shut. "Marcello?" he said. "Singan?"

I could forgive him a lot for asking those two questions. Maybe I should have lied to him, but Dan was tough and I thought he might as well know now as later.

"Dead," I told him. "They were killed quickly. Now forget about it, kid. What's done is done."

A spasm of pain passed across his battered face and he tried to get up. I pushed him back and then Manuel came running back with a bottle and a glass. I poured the tumbler three-quarters full of the brandy; then I got an arm under Dan's shoulders and held him up. Somehow I got the glass between his broken lips and he took the whole of the brandy down. It helped.

"Well, we can't stick around here all day," I said, being cheerful. "You feel well enough to travel, kid? If you don't, say so—and we'll carry you."

A faint spark of the old sardonic humor flickered behind Dan's swollen eyelids for a moment.

"I can make it," he mumbled. "Hell, I've only been beaten with a two-by-four."

Manuel and I got his arms around our necks and the three of us went on toward the stairs. I left the Jap officer hanging in the wine-cellar where I had found him. It didn't make any difference to me whether he was alive

or dead. The brandy was beginning to take hold and Dan got stronger as we went along. I wanted to ask him if the beating was all they had done to him, but I didn't dare. He saved me the trouble, anyway.

"You boys just got here in time," he mumbled thickly. "Tonight they really were going to work me over, so they said."

As we reached the level of the first floor I could hear the sounds of the battle still going on down by the barracks. The room with the staircase was empty except for a Jap lieutenant who was draped over a banister with his head split open down to the chin. Dan saw him and his lips twisted a little.

"I owe Pedro a drink for that," he whispered huskily. "That's the Nip who was using the two-by-four."

There were voices in the library and we moved along in that direction. A vague uneasiness was beginning to twitch at my nerves. This had been too easy. And where had Takuna and Otto Lanseer gone? Takuna was too smart not to have a card up his sleeve somewhere!

The Big Fellow was standing in the center of the library with Marguerita Hernando. There were others there too, but they were busy tearing down draperies and making a big pile of them against the inside wall. Marguerita had her arms around Joshua Fort's neck and the two of them didn't seem to be paying much attention to anything but themselves right at the moment. I felt Dan's arm stiffen suddenly, and was sorry that he had to find out this way. Then he sucked his breath in a little and I looked at him and saw he had everything under control. Dan had had plenty of practice in self-control during the last twenty-four hours!

The two in the middle of the room heard us then and Joshua swung around. I saw his eyes go black as he looked at Dan and the lines deepen on either side of his mouth. Marguerita was coming swiftly toward us.

"Dan!" she said. "Oh, poor Dan! What have those beasts done to you?"

He managed to grin crookedly at her. "I'm all right, kid. Nothing that a little more brandy won't cure."

I took the hint and poured another slug, smaller this time. Joshua pushed us aside, carried Dan to the desk and stretched him out while he ran over him with expert fingers. When he turned away the Big Fellow's face was dark and I knew Dan was hurt worse than I had guessed.

"Make a litter," he said to me off to one side. "He's all smashed up. Then you and your party head for the quarry. I'm going down to help Toomey disengage. It sounds like he's in trouble. We'll fire this place as we come through."

I NODDED THAT I UNDERSTOOD. It was almost full daylight outside and the ground fog was beginning to burn off. If it got much later we would be easy game for any Japs who might be left, until we could reach the shelter of the woods. I saw that Marguerita was bathing Dan's face and trying to keep from crying.

"How about Takuna and Otto Lanseer?" I asked.

Joshua said grimly: "They left for San Isidro about the same time we left for here. They had a couple of hundred men with them and figured on ambushing us there. By now they've heard the shooting and seen the smoke, so they'll be back before long. That's one reason you've got to hurry."

"Brother, I'll hurry!" I said—and I meant it.

We had one wounded man already and Toomey was bound to have more. That would slow us down and I knew that the Japs would be hunting us through the hills as if we were rabbits. We were already behind our timetable; if we got much further behind—well, I didn't like to think about it.

Joshua Fort paused for a moment. Then he said, "Ed, take care of Marguerita for me," and swung on his heel. He went out quickly through the French windows.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WE made a litter out of a brocaded drapery and a couple of curtain poles and got Dan into it. He didn't protest and I could see from the tight lines of his face that the pain was beginning to work on him. I offered to give him a shot of morphine, but he refused it; said to bring the brandy along, instead. Corporal Vantos and Pedro picked the litter up. The Moro's face was twisted into an angry scowl. The Big Fellow had told him to go with us instead of going down to the barracks to join in the fighting. I knew how he felt, but there was no help for it. We went on down the steps and through the hedge. As we reached the woods I sent the others on ahead and stopped to look back.

The barracks were a towering pillar of flame which crackled and swooshed in the still air. Greasy, black smoke belched straight up. Fighting was still going on, but the volume of small-arms fire had decreased. Probably there had been only a platoon of Japs in the barracks in the first place if Takuna had taken a large party with him to San Isidro. Toomey and the Big Fellow should be able to disengage, fire the big house and join us without much trouble.

The premonition of disaster which I had felt earlier now came back to devil me. I tried to put it out of my mind and went on up the slope to catch the rest of the party.

It was slow, hard going. I thought: "If Toomey has many litter cases we're going to have a job on our hands." After a time, Ascension and I relieved Pedro and Corporal Vantos. Momentarily I expected to hear the Big Fellow and the rest of the outfit coming through the brush; but an hour passed and they didn't put in an appearance. We had covered about a mile, I guessed.

We rested at the edge of a little cleared space where we could look down into the valley below. The barracks were still burning but the flames were lower now. I heard no rifle-shots; with a start, I realized that I hadn't heard any for the past half-hour. Then I realized something else: The big house was not burning yet and that could mean only one thing.

Toomey and Joshua were in trouble. If they hadn't been, they would have fired the big house long since and would now be on their way to join us.

Dan had been watching me. Now he raised himself on one elbow. "Give me a little more of the brandy, Ed."

I gave it to him. Marguerita was looking at me with questioning eyes and I tried to smile reassuringly at her. I guess I didn't do a very good job of it. Dan saw that.

He said quietly then: "Ed, how bad am I hurt?"

"Just scratched up and bruised," I told him.

"You're a liar. I want the truth, Ed."

"I don't know. Joshua said you were busted up inside."

Dan nodded as though that confirmed something he had thought. Then he put it into words. "I was pretty sure that was the way of it. They're in trouble down there, Ed. I'm going back."

"You're crazy," I told him, but my voice didn't carry any conviction. "They're not in trouble, and even if they were you couldn't go back. I just told you that you're all busted up inside."

Dan looked at me with a hint of that old ironical smile touching his swollen lips. Then he pushed himself up and was standing before I could stop him. I could see the sweat popping out on his forehead but he stood steadily—God knows what it cost him. Marguerita cried out and moved toward him, but he stopped her with a quick, harsh gesture.

"No! I haven't got much life left to me—but, I'll do what I want to with what I've got left."

I knew it was useless to try and stop him. Anyway, worry was growing like a cancer in my own brain. Things had gone badly wrong.

Brush crackled off to the left and I jumped, swinging my tommy-gun up. Then I swung it down again and felt good all at once. Corporal Delgano was coming through the trees with three other men.

They were winded, tired and two of them had bullet-wounds. Their faces were black with powder-smoke and soot and they were practically out of ammunition. They didn't know where Toomey was and they didn't know where the Big Fellow was. They had been told to beat it for the quarry and here they were. At least two of our men had been killed down by the barracks, they said.

I stood there for a minute longer, looking down into the valley and hoping against hope that I would see a plume of smoke start to curl up over the big house. Dan Gilroy was standing watching me with that little smile just barely perceptible on his broken mouth.

I said, "We'll go back together, Dan."

Corporal Vantos wanted to come with me, but I wouldn't let him. I caught the look on Pedro's battered face and knew that it would do no good to tell him that he couldn't either. So I saved my breath.

"You're the senior corporal," I said to Vantos, "so I'm putting you in charge of the missy, son. You and the rest go to the quarry and wait there until dark. If we don't come by then, scatter through the hills and go back to the base. Take the two young ones with you. Savvy?"

He nodded his head and I could see there were tears in his eyes. To make him feel better, I explained that a few had a better chance of helping the Teniente now than did many. Besides, the Teniente would wish that someone looked after his missy and got her safely away into the hills.

Marguerita started to say something, but I stopped her and took her aside a little. "Look, sis," I said, "you and Manuel can help most by going on. Corporal Vantos will take care of you, and it's better that the others don't come with us. I'm counting on you to keep them from following."

Well, as I have said, she was a thoroughbred. She smiled at me soberly and said she would try. Then she went over to where Dan was standing and kissed him on his battered mouth.

"Good luck, Dan," she said.

She knew what Dan and I both knew—he wasn't coming back. Then she kissed me too. Maybe she would have kissed Pedro as well, but the old reprobate had already taken care of that by starting back down the slope. I waved my hand, said "So long, boys!" and then got Dan's arm around my shoulder. He took it away again.

"I can make out all right, Ed," he told me with his small, set smile. "Let's go."

As we came out by the upper end of the hedge, we stopped in the shelter of the woods to listen. There wasn't anything to hear but there was something to see. A Jap command-car stood on the gravel by the French windows and a half-dozen Jap soldiers were crowded there on the porch, looking at something going on inside.

Then Pedro grunted and pointed to something else with a stubby forefinger. It was a column of trucks across the valley, lurching and jouncing down the dirt road which led from San Isidro. The answer was plain enough to see. Takuna and probably Lanseer had got back with a small party, leaving the slower transportation to follow. They had trapped Toomey and the Big Fellow, probably in the act of firing the house. I felt even sicker as I looked at those trucks.

Dan said, "They'll be here in another half-hour. We've got to work fast."

I looked at him. Sweat was standing out in great beads on his face but he held himself up and his lips were tight. How he did it God only knows, except that when a tough man sets his will to anything it can be done. Dan Gilroy was tough.

We hastily made a plan. Dan would creep down along the hedge with a tommy-gun, and as soon as anything started, he would spray those Japs watching from the porch. They were so interested in what was going on that they were paying no attention to anything else. Pedro and I would go to the back of the house and work forward. We had a pretty good idea of what we would find.

"Okay," Dan said. "Let's go." I knew that talking hurt him but he was going out in his own way.

It took Pedro and me perhaps five minutes to get around to the back of the house. There was nobody in sight. There was a porch over the kitchen and we got up on that and then in through one of the windows on the second floor. Voices came from the center of the house. This was the wing where Pedro and Joshua had been earlier, and Pedro knew his way. I saw that the two of them had been busy; I counted the bodies of four Jap officers as we went down the corridor.

The thought of that truck column kept popping into my mind and I kept saying to myself: "Hurry! Hurry!" At the end of the corridor Pedro paused for a moment and motioned me up. Then I heard a guttural voice say, "Talk, you swine!"

Toomey's voice answered with a stream of unprintable blasphemies. Then something went *whuck*—I flinched as though I had taken the blow myself.

We edged out onto the landing and had a full view of what went on below. It was bad.

Toomey and the Big Fellow were down there, both of them nearly naked and with their arms bound behind them. A Jap soldier with a bayonet was ranged on either side and a third soldier stood behind them with a length of two-by-four in his hands. Major Takuna sat in a chair watching. Otto Lanseer was standing a little to one side with his feet spraddled and a cigarette in his thin, grinning mouth.

We watched for less than a split second, but that scene is etched on my mind so sharply that I'll carry it to my grave. Major Takuna was big, with the sneering brutal face of the average Japanese officer. The German was thin and snakelike, sadistically enjoying himself. The soldiers at the windows were enjoying themselves too.

Major Takuna said, "Perhaps the big one knows more answers, yess? He ees the great Teniente. He should know many answers."

I caught a fleeting glimpse of the two prisoners as I slid along the wall to get into shooting position. Toomey's mouth was twisted and contemptuous in spite of the bleeding wounds on his back and chest which the two-by-four had made. The side of the Big Fellow's face was bloody, too, but his expression was unconcerned—almost placid. That expression seemed to drive Major Takuna into greater rage.

"You tell us where the rest have gone, eh?" he yelled. "You tell us or I take your bowels out in front of you!"

"Go to hell," Joshua said. "We've sent plenty more Japs along to keep you company when you get there."

The Major snarled something in Japanese, and the soldier beside the Big Fellow grinned, showing broken and discolored teeth. He stepped back a little and drove an inch of his bayonet into Joshua's thigh just before I shot him through the head.

Pedro went over the railing, snarling and spitting like a cat and with his kris in his hand. He dropped close to Otto Lanseer and swung the big knife but the German stumbled back, and Pedro missed. I put a bullet into Lanseer and two into Major Takuna, and then swung my gun on the faces at the window. Only there weren't any more faces there and from outside I could hear the

wicked laughter of Dan's tommy-gun as he cleared the porch.

It was over quickly: Pedro paused for a second to slash at the ropes which held the Big Fellow and Toomey, and then swung around on the big Jap soldier who still stood there with his mouth hanging open a little and his two-by-four half-lifted. The kris skipped his head clear across the room and it hit with a solid thud against the far baseboard. I had already taken care of the other soldier with the bayonet.

"Jesus," Toomey said. "Glad to see you guys!"

Joshua Fort rubbed a hand across his chin and looked at me. "Where's Dan—and the others?" he asked.

"That was Dan's tommy-gun you heard out there playing tunes across the spines of those monkeys on the porch," I said. I knew what he was thinking; so I might as well have my say. "When we guessed that you and Toomey were in trouble, we figured that we might as well come back and take a hand. The five of us have been together for a long time now."

DAN WAS CRAWLING THROUGH the doorway on his hands and knees, dragging his tommy-gun after him. The Big Fellow turned a little and saw him and his eyes lighted up.

"I guess we're going to have to get a set of new rules," he said.

I started to say something to that, when a shot banged out behind me and something clipped my ear. I swore and whirled around. Major Takuna was propped on one elbow with a gun in his hand. I took two steps, and broke his wrist with the toe of my boot. Neither he nor Otto Lanseer were mortally wounded, we found. I was shooting too fast for accuracy, I guess.

I told the Big Fellow about that truck column. He went to the porch and looked. It was still some fifteen minutes away and, when he came back, he said that there was time to do the thing that we had to do. I knew what he meant and sent Pedro to find ropes.

Dan had got some more brandy and he was sitting in a chair now with one arm pressed tightly across his stomach and the glass in the other hand. His face was completely white. The Big Fellow went over to him.

"Hang on, boy," he said. "We'll have you fixed up before long now."

Dan shook his head, but the old reckless look was in his eyes again. "I'm past fixing up, Teniente," he said, "but there's a little chore that I want to do before I go."

He stopped for a moment to look at the brandy; then he lifted the glass with a steady hand and tipped the last of it down. He threw the empty glass across the room and hunched himself up straighter.

"There's two hundred Japs coming in those trucks, Teniente," he said. "Maybe you'll get away to the hills, but there's enough of them so that they'll hunt you down. You've got wounded to carry and you're damned near out of ammunition."

"We'll make it," the Big Fellow said—but he didn't look at any of the rest of us.

"No, you won't make it—not if those Japs keep coming. So you're going to fix it up for me to stop them, Teniente."

Dan went on talking, the little smile curling his lips and his eyes like holes burned in a blanket. Joshua Fort heard him out; then shook his head.

"No," he said. "We'll make it some other way."

Dan's eyes blazed. For the second time within the last hour he said, "God damn it! *I'm* the one that's passing in his chips—and I'll do it the way I please! Get the monkey-suit off that fat one over there!"

Joshua Fort sat there on his heels for a moment staring at nothing at all. Then he sighed a little and stood up.

"If that's the way you want it, little man."

"That's the way I want it," Dan told him.

We peeled off Major Takuna's uniform and then Pedro came back with the ropes. He reeved a noose in the end of each and tossed the free end up over the balcony rail. Pedro and I lifted the two men up onto the table which we had pushed under the balcony's overhang, put the nooses over their heads and secured the ropes. Joshua Fort came slowly across to stand in front of them.

He said, in a flat and toneless voice: "You men have been duly tried, convicted and condemned to death. There is nothing you can say that is important. Therefore, I shall not ask you. You have one minute to make whatever peace you can with God or yourselves."

At the end of the minute Toomey and I yanked the table from under them and left them dangling there. The Jap went down screaming and yelling hysterically but Otto Lanseer was too stiff with fear to make even a murmur.

We found dynamite in one of the cellar rooms and carried it up by the case while the Big Fellow gently helped Dan get into Major Takuna's uniform. We crammed the command-car full of the explosive and fixed caps and a fuse. The Jap column was in plain sight now a couple of miles from the Manila road.

Joshua Fort said once again: "You're sure, Dan?"

"I'm sure," Dan Gilroy told him. "Never surer of anything in my life."

I had a hell of a time to keep from busting out crying as we helped him into the front seat. Toomey was crying, frankly and unashamedly. Dan slid down low in the seat and pulled Major Takuna's cap down over his eyes. It was a good enough disguise to last for the few minutes that it had to last.

He shook hands with me, then grinned once more—a grin that was wrenched up from deep inside him—and said, "Let's go. Name a boy after me, Teniente."

The command-car got under way, swinging a little erratically. Then it straightened out and gathered speed.

We set a torch to the big house and then filed on out, leaving the bodies on the floor and the two hanging from the balcony rail. They were still now. We didn't say anything as we went on up the hedge row, but at the top we stopped.

THE COMMAND-CAR HAD REACHED the cross-roads and had stopped in the center of them. We could see Dan's arm wave. The six trucks, loaded with Japanese soldiers, closed up into a tight little group and then the command-car started down alongside them. It was opposite the middle truck when it happened.

A blinding flash of light suddenly obscured the cross-roads and the concussion beat against us like a giant wave. We could see dark pieces of debris flying through the air—then the yellow smoke started blowing away across the cane. When it had gone there was nothing left down there but smoking stumps of trucks across which little flames licked and played.

Joshua Fort said slowly: " 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.' God rest you, Dan Gilroy, in whatever Valhalla you have gone to."

My own epitaph to Dan Gilroy was simpler. It was the song that he used to sing to the accompaniment of Superiano's guitar when we camped for the night after the long march—when the chicken was stewing in the pot and we drank a highball of captured Jap whisky as we listened to Don Annunzio telling his lies over Radio Manila. The song goes:

Oh, there's many's the man's been murdered in Luzon,
And in Samar and Mindanao.
Oh, there's many's the man's been murdered in the Philippines,
And lies sleeping in some lonesome grave.

Yes, I think Dan would have liked that.

THE DOUGH YOU BLOW —will bring U.S. woe!

What a boom we were handed by World War No. 1! Money came easily —went easily. Everybody was splurging on everything—from silk underwear to diamond sunbursts. Prices went skying. Sugar eventually hit 28¢ a pound!

Bye-bye, boom. Factories closed; men laid off. Prices and wages sinking fast. Wish we'd banked some of that dough we'd blown a few years back! With jobs scarce, that money would have come in mighty handy, then.

Prosperity. Stocks up fifty points in a week. Again everybody was buying everything—yachts, jewelry, stocks, real estate, regardless of cost. Depression? Phooey . . . we thought we'd found a way to lick depression.

Or had we? Bread lines, apple venders. WPA. "Brother, can you spare a dime?" No jobs. Prices dropping. Wages dropping. Everything dropping—except the mortgage on the house. "What goes up must come down."

We're splurging again. Americans have been earning more money. But even today there are fewer goods to spend it on—so naturally prices rise. We must keep them in check. DON'T LET *IT* ALL HAPPEN AGAIN!

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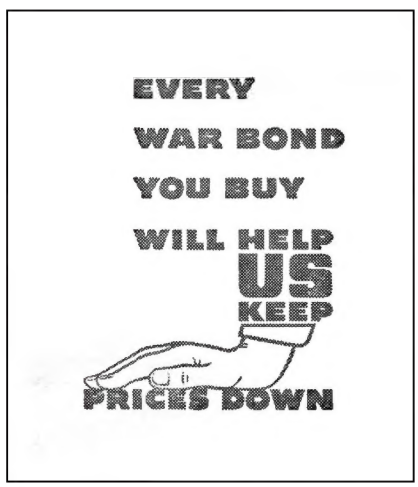
4 THINGS TO DO to keep prices down and help avoid another depression

1. Buy only what you really need.
2. When you buy, pay no more than the ceiling prices. Pay your ration points in full.
3. Keep your *own* prices down. Don't take advantage of war conditions to ask for more—for your labor, your services, or the goods you sell.
4. *Save.* Buy and hold all the War Bonds you can afford—to help pay for the war and insure your future. Keep up your insurance.



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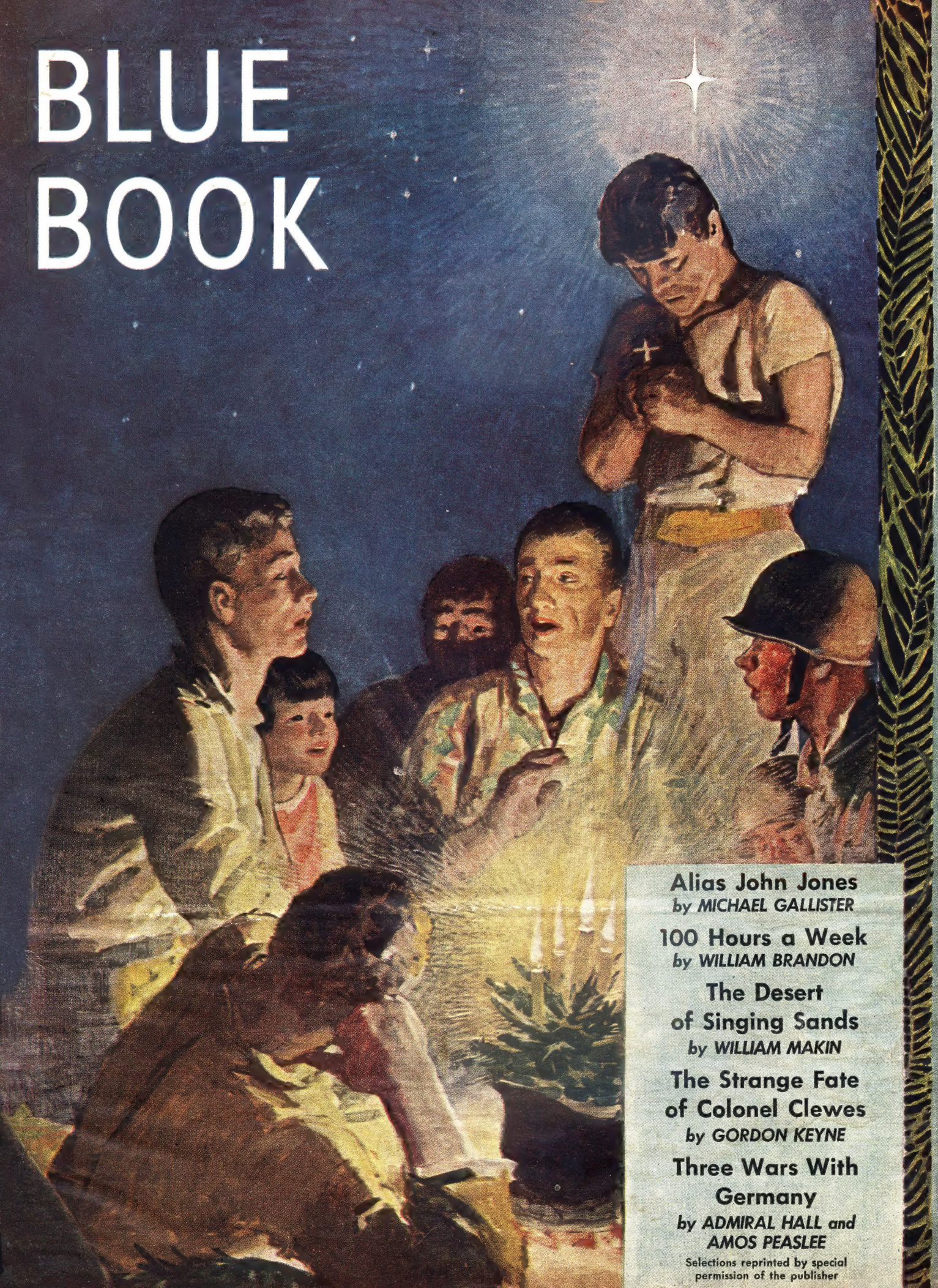

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